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POSSIBILITIES FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF PRAYER

G. A. Friz

Every praying individual prays after his own fashion, for prayer is mostly a subjective matter and defies any normative formula or prescription. As in education there are also stages of development or advancement in the art of praying. A careful observer is able to discover three distinct types that can be classified according to their advancement.

The majority of praying folk are in the elemental stage. They generally ask God for physical and material things; they seek divine intervention when calamity threatens; they implore Him to heal their sick; they ask Him to provide them with the necessities of life (which He does even without their asking); they beseech Him to prosper them materially, to insure their safety, to bless their armies, to fight their battles, to send rain and to stop the floods, to shift the storms and to banish the grasshoppers, to cure the incurable and to save the doomed—, briefly, they pray essentially the same as did their religious ancestors of primitive times. Probably most of us will continue to pray in this fashion. It is not the aim of this treatise to insinuate that this status of prayer is lamentable; nor is its purpose a disparagement of those who still pray in this elemental manner. Its aim is to suggest possibilities for reconstruction to those sincere praying people who find it impossible to subscribe to the prayer-methods and content of the elemental stage. Through bitter experience or through a marked

development of their spiritual selves they have advanced to the transition stage of prayer.

The elemental stage having proved itself unsatisfactory and unreasonable, they ceased to pray according to the elemental prototype and either abandoned the prayer habit or they are earnestly trying to reconstruct the same. They are seeking the guidance and sympathy of their spiritual leaders who often glibly and thoughtlessly urge them to go back to the elemental class of praying people, and term such desires as ungodly or modernistic. When one considers the decline of the prayer habit today, there may be perhaps as much reason for rejoicing as for lamenting; for among the thousands who have abandoned the habit of praying, there are many who can be truly classified as those who have advanced in their prayer life and are developing a desire to pray for spiritual things only. There are few people who can pray for spiritual gifts only; yet they typify the highest type of praying folk. This treatise seeks to suggest possibilities for reconstruction to those who are of the transition stage that they might find their way into the advanced group, there to enjoy the harmony of mind and spirit, the complete satisfaction that comes from praying rightly.

I.

It does not require an astute mind to discern the decline in the practice of prayer. Evidences of this decline are so numerous, that it is almost unnecessary to give specifications. One need only to refer to the infrequency, and in some cases the complete abandonment of the prayer meeting; to the growing discontinuance of family worship; to the decay of habits of personal devotions even in the lives of those who are active church members. The vivid sense of God as a determining factor in daily life, which was characteristic of an older piety, seems strange to many of the earnest young people of our day.

Especially among college students a marked decline is evident. Those who judge superficially will draw the conclusion that the new knowledge annihilated the desire to pray, destroying thereby the only vital connection between student and God. Upon more serious inquiry, however, one finds the abandonment of the prayer habit among students due to the recognition of certain characteristics of the prayer habit, the absurdity or the inconsistency of which was all too apparent to the inquisitive and searching mind. Naturally there were also difficulties resulting from the conflict of science and theology. One could hardly reconcile the fact of an orderly universe with the tenet of a capricious God.

Kirsopp Lake in an article in the Atlantic Monthly begins by telling us what prayer has meant to praying people of the past and then goes on to explain why it cannot mean the same thing to us

who are living today. Prayer to our fathers was primarily petition, the process by which God "was induced to do otherwise than he would have done if prayer had not been used." But modern science with its clearer revelation of the laws of life, has made this view no longer possible to many modern men.

While there are sufficient reasons which in part explain the decline of prayer life among students and the educated class, the loss of the prayer habit among the handicraft classes is not so easily explained. We cannot attribute this loss to their philosophizing about prayer; they are not critics of religion, and yet the art of prayer has lost its appreciators even in this group. This we can attribute to the general misunderstanding of prayer. Generally where a devoted prayer life has been forsaken, we find as a cause the fact that prayer "failed to work" in times of dire need. Prayer was that emergency apparatus which failed to function at the time when calamity occurred. Such people lost faith in an apparatus of their own invention, but seldom did realize that they had the wrong conception of prayer.

Closely connected with the conception that prayer is but the wish of man, desired for his own benefit and the welfare of those of his own communion, is the false notion that God should make all the adjustments for man; that man is but the chessman that is moved on the board of this universe by the wisdom of God, and that man himself is not required to harmonize and to reestablish himself in the chaos wrought by calamity. Therefore it occurs that man does not even attempt to make adjustments, but readily deduces that God is his enemy or prayer a false notion.

Despite the fact that there has been a general decline of prayer practice, there are many signs of revival. These are all the more hopeful because they are indicative of new conceptions of prayer, its purpose and its values. There is first the re-discovery of the inner life. People's thoughts are turning again to the more intimate and personal aspects of religion. Another hopeful sign is the tendency toward a better understanding of providence. Catastrophe is not considered God's wrath exercised on a sinful people, cataclysms no longer are the instruments of punishment. Man's insignificance in a vast universe becomes more apparent through scientific discoveries—, and men realizes that it is morally wrong to avoid making necessary adjustments in times of catastrophe. We are getting closer toward the understanding of the words of Jesus—"Not my will but Thine will be done."

With these hopeful signs numerous possibilities present themselves. Prayer tomorrow will be little different from the prayer of the past unless we profit by the experience of the present day. In considering what prayer today lacks, what obstacles present

themselves, and what are the causes for unfavorable reaction, we venture to discuss possibilities for reconstruction.

II.

One cannot suggest possibilities for reconstruction without taking recognition of individual religious experience. The best psychologist or psycho-analyst cannot penetrate completely into the soul life of the individual. Their deductions are always the result of observing thought processes and reactions. In trying to reconstruct a defunct prayer life one is confronted with the task of rebuilding a shattered faith.

First the mind must be disabused of certain misconceptions. One must cease to conceive prayer as a duty and be convinced that it is an unspeakable privilege. Prayer is the free, spontaneous outgoing of the inner self to something without. If prayer is merely a duty for certain people, it were better if they ceased to pray for a time until the need awakes which transforms prayer into a privilege.

Secondly, one must rid himself of the idea that God is a partial, unduly favoring and insistent deity. Although a prayer might close with the rather commonplace expression—"Not my will but thine be done," there is usually a feeling present that God must recognize the plea of so worthy a person as the one who is praying. Generally the well-being of the individual and hardly ever of the group is considered.

Prayer in indeed "the soul's sincere desire," but not all desires expressed in prayers are of the soul; mostly they are of the flesh. Prayer is more than a wish. Wish prayers are sham prayers just as wishes are abortive substitutes for volition. Petition is a will-attitude. A voluntary act as ordinarily understood includes both a change of will attitude and a change of bodily functioning. We seem by an act of will to set free characteristic forms of energy that express themselves in bodily movement. But strictly speaking only the change in the inner life of the self can be reckoned as part of our transaction. What follows in the external world, including the body is the response of the ultimate power in carrying out the volition.

There are two factors involved in prayer; the subjective appeal and the objective response. The self contributes only the suppliant attitude. The act of the will changes the inner state and nothing more. The self often makes the mistake of thinking that by its importunity it can make nature serve its demands, but upon analysis it discovers that it can only request or petition. It must appeal to the power upon which we depend. The self wills, the Power executes. The universe is such that when a human being rightly wills a certain good, as for instance a desirable change in the en-

vironment, the good comes to pass. The inevitableness of the result is impressive. This reveals that God stands ready to carry out our wills, when *we carry out the conditions.* Naturally these conditions are all moral, because we live in a moral world where good is obtained by request and only so. The universe is infinitely sensitive to will-attitudes and we are called upon to utilize this sensitivity to our profit.

This in part explains the success that the "New Thought" enthusiasts claim. However not all prayer is successful as measured by the petition itself, for we do not always meet the conditions. We can never be sure that we have met the conditions for obtaining the good we pray for, although sometimes that is the fortunate coincidence. The principle behind the New Thought idea is on a rather high plane, but to most of its enthusiasts it is never apparent, much less understood. The external world is for them the important thing and their inner life is seldom touched. As soon as the individual believes that God operates only in the spiritual world all prayer will be directed toward the enrichment of selfhood. Whatever happens in the external world will be of secondary importance, even though it may in many cases be far from negligible. All physical change is subsidiary yet instrumental to the development of selfhood. Prayer leads the soul into the spiritual world, into a conscious presence of God. There as it sees the vastness of the universe, it receives a different conception of values. It is able to distinguish between values that are abiding and those that are but imaginative in a world of flesh. God's will is recognized and understood, and the soul which heretofore had only a microcosmic perspective pledges its cooperation to the ultimate power as it views the larger world of abiding values. Communion with God in prayer is the supreme experience of life. The soul returns from this experience with a new attitude toward God and the universe. It realizes that the most desirable good is not the preservation of material values, but the preservation of all moral and spiritual values. It knows that the good sought for the body is entirely negligible in comparison with the good sought for the beneficence of mankind, in other words, for God. There is also the conviction that unless the soul carries out the conditions there can be no success in prayer. We can be fairly sure that the following conditions hold.

1. Prayer must enlist all our resources, spiritual and physical to achieve results. The prayer should be for something intrinsically better than what we have. When we are mistaken as to the desirability of the good we seek, we may not expect the answer to be in exact accord with the request. Our limitations of insight, on the one hand, and the cosmic character of interests involved, on the

other, make it necessary for the worshiper to pray in the spirit of the great petition, "Not my will but thine be done."

2. Paramount in the things we pray for should be the spiritual good. An indication of advancement in prayer is the petitioning for this good only. It is very difficult to pray for spiritual things when so many material needs are pressing for attention. It is no easy matter for the soul to detach itself from the things of the world and seek solely its spiritual development. A great deal of adjustment is necessary.

III.

Spiritual education is required to make correct religious adjustments. There must be the recognition of an orderly universe. Prayers which petition God to perform a miracle by intervening in the orderly processes of nature are generally motivated by selfish, materialistic desires, or else they portray an ignorance of the divine plan of an orderly universe. We concede the fact that it is God's will that there be an orderly universe and yet we beseech Him to change the world order, suspend the laws of nature and perform a miracle every time our lives are endangered. Most of us have had the experience that God does not change the order of the universe after it was established and He "saw that it was good." Praying people in the transition stage must learn not to depend on miracles in the sense of divine arbitrary interventions, but they must find a reasonable solution of the religious problems of evil and suffering.

When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that the bitter cup might pass from him, he finally realized that it was for the greatest good of the world that events take their course and thus be submitted to the higher will of his Father. He knew that as long as his will was in harmony with that of his Father no harm could befall his soul. He did not insist that God change the course of events to save his life. He could have commanded "a legion of angels" to help him, or he might have stepped from the cross, but that would have been a violation of natural laws, and he who performed miracles himself refused to ask God to perform a miracle in his behalf. He knew that ultimate, spiritual values created in his life would be preserved. That is why he faced unspeakable calumny and despicable death serenely and without fear. His prayer attitude typifies the advanced stage of prayer life.

"The question of prayer and its answer must be faced from this point of view. How many are there who have prayed in the agony of spirit that the bitter cup might pass from them, and the heavens seemed as brass; to its very dregs they drank the cup. There is a place and a large one for answer to prayer. Prayer is the right religious adjustment, and there are objective effects following the right religious adjustment which would not be experienced with-

out it. This is the dependable human experience of the answer of prayer. But it is also a dependable human experience that the heavens are as brass toward any petition that asks for what is against the laws of nature. There is a law of prayer and its answer. But there is no place in the best possible kind of universe for the arbitrary interruption of the established natural order."** (D. C. Macintosh—The Reasonableness of Christianity.)

The man who prays in this spirit will soon experience that prayer is something real; that in this educational process he understands correctly what adjustments to make under any circumstances. There is a certain spirit of adventure found in every adjustment that man has to make. No occurrence in man's life, formerly considered as inherently evil, will then be accepted as the inevitable; but it will be considered as an opportunity for the spirit to adjust itself in the best way possible. Thus a man, whose dearest child is suddenly stricken and taken from him, must begin to pray. That implies that he must try to reconcile such an occurrence with his belief in a loving God. Such a task is never an easy matter. But in reflecting upon the truth that spiritual values will be conserved, man finds his God (who now seems cruel and inconsiderate) to be transformed into a loving, sympathetic companion with whom he can discuss his own personal woe and sorrow. In trying to understand, the man prayed, that is he sought communion with the supreme Power. He wanted to know why his personal will had not triumphed. Once in tune with the Infinite, he discovers the truth that such was the price he had to pay for an orderly universe and that it would have been utterly selfish for him to insist that God intervene for his sake; for him who was but one sufferer among countless millions. With that conviction he begins to adjust his life and character to the situation, his attitude of animosity disappears and God is again the God of love because He is just and all-wise. The problem is to find and establish that adjustment through which God can do this for us. The prayer which God answers is not merely a prayer of words, but it is the prayer of total organic and mental adaptation to Him.

All life is a preparation for prayer; at least it may be made so, since it is the scene of God's constant activity. The possibilities which we have considered arise from our conception of what prayer means and implies. The suggested conception that prayer is in a sense volition and all volition is prayer implies that it all depends upon our change of attitude. If we want our prayers to be effective we must change our false notions—, that prayer means extreme activity on the part of God and passivity on our part; that God should adjust Himself to us and we remain idle and merely receive without effort the "free" gifts of God. If God is to do what we

will, we must carry out the conditions, and these are moral. An understanding of the moral order can only be acquired through contemplation when God speaks to us; then we begin to grasp the moral purposes of life and the universe. And having sensed the implications of a moral order we cannot help but adjust ourselves to those conditions, which, although adverse to our own individual well-being, are nevertheless requisite for an orderly universe. In the realization of our moral duty to aid in the sustentation of this world, we will continually be praying, that is, we shall never cease making our adjustments, nor will we ever entirely succeed in fulfilling the conditions which are generated by our wills as an obligation to God for His readiness to carry out our volition. Through these possibilities the prayer life of those in the transition stage can be reconstructed upon a firm and proved basis; and many who observe the fingers of traditional and elementary praying people pointing guiltily and accusingly at their apparent negligence, or disregard, or liberalism, will be encouraged to know that there are possibilities for reconstruction and advancement in prayer that will in no way lead them away from God but will bring them into closer and more intimate relationship with Him.

MODERN PREACHERS AND THEIR PREACHING

W. Bechtold

In selecting so comprehensive and prolific a subject, the writer is fully aware that he can not adequately treat, much less exhaust, the same in the space allotted for this article. To do full justice to the subject, would call for a book of many pages. The purpose of this essay is, to merely point out the line of thought the pulpiteers of today are following, to show what kind of spiritual food they are offering their congregations, and to present some personal ideas of the writer regarding modern preaching. The expression "modern preachers" is not used in the sense of "modernism," for the sermons the writer has studied in preparation for this article, include those of preachers who may be termed "fundamentalists," however, in the best sense of the word. The term "modern," as used in connection with the subject, covers the present era, a period of ten or fifteen years, which is in the truest sense a period of modern thought along religious lines. Viewed from this angle, every preacher occupying a pulpit during this time, is a modern preacher, though not necessarily one who is a victim of modernism in the obnoxious meaning of the term. Naturally we would expect the modern preacher to preach a modern sermon, in keeping with progressive religious thought and revelation. Now we know from the history of mankind that in its various ages the needs, tastes, ideas, and standards regarding mode of living, social customs, art, etc. have continually changed, and consequently the form and style of preaching have likewise undergone various changes in accordance with conditions and circumstances prevailing in each age.

The spiritual needs of mankind, however, have remained the same at all times, neither has the standard of morality been subject to any widely divergent changes. There can therefore be no vital difference in the subject-matter of Christian preaching of former ages and today; only the form may vary to meet existing conditions, and to present the Gospel in such a manner that modern minds may the more readily grasp its great truths.

Says the Rev. W. R. Matthews in his book, "The Gospel and The Modern Mind": "The needs of the human soul have a strange persistence. Superficially they may seem to change. But if we look at the psychological situation rather than at the words and figures in which it has been expressed, we shall see that in essentials it does not vary. It may be true that 'the modern man is not worrying about his sins', and it is certainly true that he is not greatly disturbed by the fear of hell; but he is worrying about his com-

plexes and he is in search of the same kind of deliverance as that which his predecessors were pursuing—the inner peace which can only come from the resolution of conflict and the unification of the self round a satisfying object of love and loyalty. The modern man needs salvation, he needs to be shown a life that is worth living and to obtain the power to live it."

This is what modern preachers are aiming to do, not all, however, in the same way, i. e., not by the same kind of preaching. No doubt some are shooting past the mark, as a few quotations from sermons of some outstanding preachers in a nearby midwestern metropolis will show.

One of these modern preachers, styling his church "The Community Center," chooses for his topic "Amos 'n' Andy" and says in part: "The devoted friendship between Amos and Andy compares favorably with historic friendships between two men, running clear back to the time of David and Jonathan." Later on in the same sermon this modern preacher says by way of application: "It is a Christian philosophy, after all. (The philosophy of the above negro impersonators). It is the simple life that Jesus came to teach. . . . What higher thing did He teach us than affection for one another and loyalty to one another? Love, the greatest thing in the world, the very top of Jesus' teaching, affection in all our relationships, this we can learn from the humblest people more often than from the richest and most aristocratic."

No doubt, the application of the subject is very apt and strikingly original. It would perhaps never enter the mind of a preacher of the old school to choose such a subject for a sermon and to apply it in that way. But the question arises: What actual need of the soul is supplied by such preaching?

From another sermon of the same preacher on the subject, "A 6-Foot God," we quote the following: "The grown-up God, the scientific God, the God of the modern times must be a God of law. He never can keep those stellar galaxies, weighing millions of millions of millions of tons, swirling like puffs of smoke in space without law, rigid, regular, implacable and irrevocable law. We all live under law and die under law. Let us get that through our heads and quit talking about 'God in His infinite mercy has taken out of this body the spirit that inhabited it.'

"God's infinite mercy had nothing to do with the cancer, or the typhoid, or the pneumonia that took out of this body the spirit that inhabited it."

Then referring again to those "stellar galaxies," the preacher in question continues: "No use asking God to put His fingers into the creation and stop the operation of the law. One of those galax-

ies might swing out of its place if He interfered even for the life of one single man, and the whole thing go to wreck and ruin."

The discourse closes thusly: "To see Jesus with the eye of faith and imagination is about as near as any of us can come to seeing that more than 6-foot God."

What satisfaction can a soul, seeking the God of mercy and love, derive from a sermon in which such a relentless God of law is proclaimed?

From another "modern" sermon by a preacher of a different denomination we quote two very significant passages: "I remember when we were taught that every word in the Bible was inspired and to be accepted in every detail. We were taught that God actually walked in the Garden of Eden and talked to Adam and Eve. Anthropomorphic conceptions of God are no longer tenable. Modern thought is protesting against such static and literalistic theology, a protest similar to that manifest in Luther's day."

"We should rejoice in the reform movement of Luther 400 years ago. Yet we should be happier still in a modern reform movement, just as momentous and far-reaching as the one led by the great Luther. God speed the day when we shall be led out of our intellectual, creedal and denominational bondage into a promised land of liberated and practical Christianity wherein human personality is supreme."

This preacher is both modern and modernistic.

Contrast with the foregoing the statement of a preacher who is modern, occupying a chair of theology in a prominent theological seminary. He very likely would be dubbed a "reactionary" by the modernist.

"There can be no compromise or straddling the issue. 'He that is not for me is against me.' You can't worship at the altar of popular opinion and then come before Christ. Today our pastors must discern on the basis of the Scriptures how they can strengthen their spiritual existence and make others see the road of salvation. We do not want them to know Shaw or Dostoevski; to review 'Green Pastures' or other books."

It is not difficult to guess the denomination of this modern preacher who dares to contend for the ancient purpose of the Christian pulpit.

Speaking further of modern preaching, not the extreme, but the normal, we make bold to offer a few suggestions which might prove instrumental in promoting the effectiveness of the modern sermon, so that it might the better accomplish its ultimate purpose, the *salvation of souls*. We postulate for the modern sermon the following requirements:

I. That Its Contents Be the Gospel

No more than the Gospel and also no less, but all of the Gospel, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, for "every Scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." Some modern sermons are no longer based on the Scriptures, consequently they do not proclaim the essentials of salvation. They are lectures on subjects of literature, history, science, or discussions of current events, social, political, or others, biography, character sketches, book reviews, etc.

In the following list of topics, gleaned from over 300 sermon subjects, published by preachers of eight different denominations in a metropolitan newspaper of the midwest, we have a variety of topics which evidently are not based on Scriptural texts, at least, it would prove a difficult task for one who is not thoroughly familiar with his Bible to find texts to fit them:

"Mussolini versus the Pope."
"Russia, Threat or Challenge?"
"Gandhi Half Naked Fanatic? or Saint and Prophet of a New Era?"
"Titanic Blues."
"The Wisdom of Will Rogers."
"Gandhi Proposes the Politics of Jesus."
"The Field Museum, Monkeys and Man."
"Stupendous or Ridiculous—Which?"
"The World Upside Down May Be Right Side Up."
"Closing the Banks."

In addition to these topics a number of book reviews were announced. No doubt these preachers had texts, but having a text for a discourse does not necessarily make the sermon Scriptural, for the sermon must grow out of the text. As a rule we do not build houses first and then set them on a foundation. The superstructure arises, so to speak, out of the foundation. One may construct his sermon first, or at least prepare it in outline, and then look for a text, or find the text first and let it serve as the foundation upon which the sermon is built up. The question arises, which is the better way? Famous preachers of former days have followed both plans. (Beecher, Brooks, Newman, et al.)

Scriptural preaching is demanded by the soul in its search after God and salvation, yet science, literature, art, and current events may be employed in a Gospel sermon by way of illustration, as a means to an end, but not as the latter itself, which end or purpose at times seems to be merely to display the preacher's intelligence and keen-mindedness, or to build up for him a reputation

at the expense of his hearers, who have come to find soul food but receive only husks.

There is a greater demand among modern church-goers for the pure Gospel with its solemn truths, than some preachers seem to realize. There are even today in every Christian congregation many who come to the church service for the purpose of being filled with bread of heaven, and to drink of the water of life. Shall they be fed with the husks of rampant modernism, with unproven theories of an agnostic science, or with social and political jabbering, having no bearing whatever on the welfare of their souls, and satisfying no yearning and searching of their sin-afflicted and care-worn hearts?

The modern sermon should have for its contents, and deal with the essentials of religion, in order to adequately meet the spiritual needs of this age.

While we earnestly contend for the Gospel sermon, which does not neglect the essentials of Christian faith, we will in no wise deny, that the modern sermon must assume.

II. A Form Which Meets Certain Justifiable Demands

These are:

a) *Brevity in regard to time.*

b) *Practicality as opposed to Doctrinality.*

c) *Popularity in style, to forestall a stereotype sermonic form.*

d) *Variation of subjects.*

a) *The modern sermon should be brief.* Is this demand justifiable? We believe it is, although under certain circumstances, the preacher need not comply with it. We do not limit Chautauqua lectures or other public speeches to 25 or 30 minutes, yet people will sit patiently for hours to hear them, while they find it difficult to "sit through" a half hour sermon, without signs of impatience. Yet withal, we believe, that in keeping with the general trend of our time to concentrate, condense, and centralize, ministers of the Gospel should endeavor to master the art of brevity. In a sermon of half an hour's duration, if carefully planned and thought out, we may give the attentive hearer sufficient food for thought. The long sermon is seldom the most effective. We have human nature to reckon with even at the time of worship.

We are living in an age, marked by restless activity in every field of human endeavor, and all this activity is directed to the achievement of definite practical results. It is eminently a practical age.

b) *The modern sermon should therefore also be practical.* The demand of the age in regard to Gospel preaching is practicality as opposed to that ossified doctrinality which is so out of keeping with this fast-moving, on-rushing 20th century civilization. We are not saying, however, that the doctrines of Christianity shall be

barred from the modern pulpit, for there is dire need of fundamental doctrinal preaching. It is essential that we keep before this generation the blessed teachings of the Master and the doctrines founded on them. We thoroughly disagree with those who would cast aside all the fundamentals and remain only on the periphery of faith. The rabid fundamentalist may be the representative of the one extreme, but the "superficialist" who would take out of Christianity all that is divine and leave only the human element. is certainly the other extreme of modern theology.

The danger, however, of drifting into a onesided discussion of doctrines, which after all avail little, unless applied to the practical life of the Christian, is apparent. Our pulpits should not be made chairs of systematic theology, but rather a forum for presenting and discussing the practical problems of Christian life in a practical manner, so that our hearers may be enabled to translate into every day life the great truths which Christ taught and which He Himself lived out during His presence on earth, thereby setting the most lofty example for His followers, and especially for ministers of the Gospel. The doctrinal sermon is needed to instruct in the essentials of faith, to lay the foundation for faith, and to strengthen it, but practical preaching is more necessary, for it builds up on the foundation of faith the Christlike life, a life of love and service, produces Christian character, enables men to be better citizens of community and country, at the same time qualifying them for citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

c) *The demand for popular preaching* is one with which the modern preacher seems sometimes to comply too freely. Deep thinking on the weightier matters of faith is not as prevalent among church-goers today as it was a generation or so ago, despite the fact that most congregations have a better educated membership than formerly. But the trend of our time is toward that which is light in character. In music and the drama, jazz and burlesque have displaced the opera, the oratorio and the classic play. So the average church goer clamors for the popular preacher who preaches an equally popular sermon in a language which the man on the street can understand, and in a form which will entertain rather than edify. Yet withal, the demand for popular preaching is justified. The needs of the hour, the current problems, the characteristics of our time must be taken into account. Itinerant preachers and evangelists, employing popular methods, and preaching in a pleasing, striking and entertaining manner, succeed in reaching that class of people which is often neglected, or, still oftener, refuses to be cared for, by the established churches and their pastors. Whether or not, in order to draw the crowds, we should imitate the pulpit pranks of a Billy Sunday or other barn-

storming evangelists and revivalists, or present the Gospel in some other popular, but perhaps less drastic and dramatic way, to attain the desired result, is a matter we hesitate to decide; however, we shall insist on the demand of popular preaching in its best form.

If some would look with suspicion or prejudice upon the so-called popular preacher, imagining him to be a spineless sort of a creature, ready to comply with every whim of his parishioners, and willing to adopt any fad that comes along, let them bear in mind that this is the extreme, and all extremes are, of course, objectionable. On the other hand, it is better to possess and enjoy popular favor, than to have the ill-will of the congregation to contend with. In fact, a minister has outlived his usefulness in a congregation, and perhaps in the community at large, when he ceases to be popular.

The popular preacher avoids any tendency to adhere to stereotype forms in or out of the pulpit, any stiffness in conduct and bearing, whereby people are led to think that he has a superiority complex, which causes him to hold himself aloof from the "common herd." To be popular means simply, to be, and to remain, at all times in touch with folks, so as to be able to meet their actual spiritual needs, not only from the pulpit, but in private spiritual ministration as well.

In accordance with the varying spiritual needs of human souls there must be

d) *Variation in preaching.* The subjects may be chosen either according to ecclesiastic seasons, where the church year is observed, or in accordance with congregational and denominational requirements and ordinances, or as individual, congregational, or community needs and conditions may require. There is no need of specifying, for a thousand and one subjects present themselves for choice.

The modern preacher evidently enjoys perfect freedom in the choice of subjects and texts. Even in those churches which prescribe pericopes for every Sunday and festival of the church year, pastors quite frequently choose "free" texts. Evangelical preachers have broken away more and more from the biennial rotation of Gospel and Epistle texts and are using free texts more frequently than a generation or so ago. Years ago the writer was accused by one of his parishioners of not complying with the custom of the Evangelical Church because he did not preach on the "Evangelium" every Sunday.

In choosing sermon subjects much depends on the right choice at the right time. Looking over again the long list of sermon subjects referred to above, we find a regular "pi," a veritable mixtum compositum, sermons preached "in season and out of season" (liter-

ally), topics at Christmas time which would be more appropriate for Easter subjects, timely and untimely, original and borrowed, anything and everything, to fill the time in the pulpit on Sunday and the columns of the newspaper on Monday. Of course, we must bear in mind that these subjects are not the selection of one preacher, nor of preachers of the same denomination. Nevertheless, we find the church year a most useful institution for homiletic reasons. A more uniform sermonizing by all pastors of our church, or any other, having the church year, is made possible, and every phase of church life, and every development of personal religious life is covered. Where the church year is not adhered to the choice of texts and subjects will of necessity be in accordance with the personal ideas of the pastors regarding the "eternal fitness" of things. Just so no real spiritual need goes unnoticed and remains unmet.

It now remains for us to consider just one more point in connection with our subject:

III. The Modern Preacher Dare Not Lose Sight of the Purpose of Gospel Preaching

This seems to us the weightiest matter of all. Here we have the most fault to find with modern preachers and their problems. There are the behaviorists and the humanists. To make men better, morally, intellectually, to make them happier in the worldly sense of the word, to preach a Gospel of ease and comfort, to regain Paradise lost, change earth to heaven, that is the burden of their testimony. Others stress the practical side of Christianity to the breaking point, as though the purpose of preaching were to make men and women more active church members. Church life is made the equivalent of spirituality. Still others seek to train men for better citizenship here on earth, without a thought of the citizenship which is in heaven. Finally there are those who preach a "soft" Gospel, telling only of the joys and blessings of the Christian religion, but neglecting the subjects of repentance and conversion, for to brighten life and to bring happiness to all men—that is the mission of Gospel preaching. Do they not forget that there can be no true happiness without the painful ordeal of self abasement and no newness of life without regeneration?

Surely Gospel preaching will do all this—will make men better physically, intellectually, morally, socially, will bring happiness, true inward happiness for time and eternity. These are its results if its requirements are met by those who hear and heed it. But the one thing that is needful, upon which all else depends, is the salvation of man's immortal soul.

But salvation is not only transcendental, not only the blissful life of eternity, and the joy of heaven. It pertains to this life as well.

The Christian religion is often accused of "otherworldliness," unjustly. Believing in Jesus we *have* eternal life, here and now. perhaps this is not always clearly emphasized by fundamentalists. On the other hand, the modernist seems to lose sight of the transcendental character of fundamental religion. Therefore, two extremes should be avoided by the modern preacher:

1) Modernizing the sermon to such an extent that its spiritual and transcendental character and purpose, man's salvation, is neglected or lost sight of.

2) Preaching sermons which dwell on the future life of the soul and neglect the needs of body and soul, of the whole personality, in this life.

Modern preaching, therefore, to be evenly balanced, will have to deal with the Gospel in its two fold relation—to this life, and the life that is to come. That is the standard of Gospel preaching which should not change in any age, no matter how progressive, scientific or enlightened it may be. This standard is therefore binding for the modern preacher, for he, too, has been commissioned by the Lord of the Church and ordained by the Church of Jesus Christ to preach the GOSPEL OF SALVATION.

SERMON SKETCHES

By A. Berlekamp

May 1

Praying In Jesus' Name

John 16: 23 "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

"How wonderful! Jesus gives us a charm to overcome God's reluctance. The phrase 'in Jesus' name' is the Christian's Aladdin's magic lamp." Thus construe our text? No! True prayer fulfills not external but spiritual and moral conditions. Thus not magic. Jesus perfectly knew and fulfilled the necessary conditions of true prayer. We learn from him.

We pray in Jesus' name.

I. When we have Jesus' motives in prayer.

1. Jesus' primary motive was communion with God. Need of companionship. Reciprocal interaction between praying and sense of companionship: each influences the other.

2. Thus Jesus sought to learn God's will: "Thy will, not mine, be done." Did not seek to coerce God to do Jesus' will.

3. Jesus craved spiritual more than material gifts. Cf. petitions in Lord's Prayer. "All these things shall be *added* unto you."

How do our motives check with above? Do we not often seek to persuade a reluctant God to do our will, seeking first "all these *things*," with perhaps the after thought that somehow the Kingdom of God will be added unto us? Such inversion morally impossible.

II. When we have Jesus' spiritual attitude in prayer.

1. Complete trust in God's love, wisdom, power. "Trust is the native air of friendship. A breath of doubt chills and chokes." *S. D. Gordon.*

2. Humility. Parable of Pharisee and Publican reveals Jesus' condemnation of self-righteous pride in prayer.

3. Earnestness. "Sweat as great drops of blood."

4. Steadfastness. Parable of Importunate Widow.

How does our attitude check with above? Do we not often pray doubtingly, self-righteously, luke-warmly, sporadically? Dare we expect affirmative answers to such praying?

III. When we are conscious of Jesus' companionship in prayer.

1. We are assured of Jesus' presence in true prayer: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, etc." Further, He prays *for* us (John 17), so also *with* us.

2. Consciousness of Jesus' nearness helps us make prayers genuine.

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make, etc."
—*Archbishop Trench.*

May 5 (Ascension Day)

CHRIST'S ABIDING COMPANIONSHIP

Matthew 28: 20 "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Has Jesus kept His promise?

I. The history of the Christian church witnesses to Christ's abiding companionship.

1. The zeal, courage, power of endurance of the early Christian's not otherwise explainable. Examples: Stephen's vision and death-prayer, Peter's post-Ascension strength contrasted with his pre-Crucifixion weakness, Paul's conversion and subsequent repeated testimonies of Christ's presence.

2. Throughout the centuries since the Apostolic Age Christians have felt Christ's presence. Cite St. Augustine, St. Francis, Thomas à Kempis, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Father Damien, Bishop Thoburn as notable examples representing various centuries, countries, movements, temperaments, creedal positions, etc. All unite on one fundamental conviction: Christ's immediate presence and help. Thus Thoburn's statement: "Whatever success I may have had in India I attribute to the fact that Christ is always nearer to me than this man sitting here next to me."

3. Not only the illustrious but also the obscure have felt Christ's presence. Evident from the growth of the Christian church and the spread of Christian ideals in social life.

II. Where may we look for Christ today?

1. The age of Christian heroes is not past. The in-dwelling Christ constrains them to baptize and teach at home and in foreign lands and to seek to establish Christian ideals in the home, in industry, among races and nations, etc. Cite Jane Addams, Albert Schweitzer, Wilfred Grenfell, etc.

2. The important question is, Is Christ dwelling with you and me? Yes,—if we are observing and teaching others to observe "*all* things whatsoever I have commanded you." Then Christ is "The head of this house, the unseen guest at every table, the silent listener to every conversation." Then we can say with deep conviction, "Lo, Christ is with me always."

May 8

Bearing Witness: An Inescapable Obligation

John 15: 27 "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

All of us bear witness to somebody or something: to good or evil friends, to good or poor training, etc. We cannot escape it.

I. It is the Christian's duty to bear witness to Christ.

1. It is everyone's duty to witness to the highest truth he knows that others may share in it.

2. In spirit we "have been with Christ from the beginning," i. e., have seen His works, heard His words. Indeed, we have, in a sense, a greater obligation than the early disciples, for we have seen many wonderful works of the Living Christ. The glorious certainty of Christ's supremacy and all-sufficiency we must, nay rather, we want to share.

II. The Christian's life is his best witness.

1. Let no Christian refuse to confess his Lord (Mt. 10: 32). Need for courageous, outspoken Christians in an agnostic, skeptical, over-cautious age.

2. But Christian conduct is a more effective witness than Christian speech. Pious phrases *may* roll from impious tongue: Pharisees (Mt. 23: 3). The world heeds "Sermons in Shoes" and reads "Living Epistles." Traveler to Cornish miner: "You are a very temperate people here." Reply: "There lived here a man named John Wesley." Memorial tablet to Dr. Geddie, at Anetum, New Hebrides: "When he landed in 1840, there were no Christians here; when he left in 1872, there were no heathen." Fred B. Smith: "We shall not Christianize the world in a million years unless we give up this un-Christian business of war."

3. Your obligation and mine: not self-conscious conduct, neatly calculated by rule of thumb to serve as "example," but a genuine Christian inner life issuing naturally and spontaneously in a Christian outer life.

III. Christian witnessing embraces our whole life.

1. It is a full-time vocation. Not merely on Sundays, nor while in confirmation class, nor while on Church Council, nor while president of Ladies' Aid, etc. Pathetic self-indictment of those who boast: "Oh, yes, I used to be a regular attendant at church." The worst possible witness is one who retracts his testimony but expects credit for having given it.

2. It is a full-space vocation. Not merely in home community but pagan while away on vacation, nor merely in home while a barbarian in the office, etc.

3. It is a full-relationship vocation. Involves Christian attitudes and conduct toward strangers and foes as well as toward friends; toward other races, classes, creeds; in business, recreation, etc.

Implicated in our witness-bearing is our own individual spiritual welfare and that of all humanity.

May 15 (Pentecost)

Power From on High

Acts 1: 8 "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

What a promise! How we crave power, admire the powerful, pity the impotent!

I. Our need of power.

1. Knowledge alone, though desirable, is inadequate. "To know the good is to do the good" is a false epigram. Cite specific cases of intelligent and educated people doing wrong. Also: "I know I ought to attend church, but. . . ."

2. Power necessary to impel the will actively to seek the good and to resist the evil.

3. All need it, for the conflict of flesh and spirit is universal. St. Paul's confession: "The good that I would I do not."

II. The gift of power from on high.

1. There is not sufficient power within individual man nor within humanity apart from God. The fate of naturalistic humanism: the disillusionment and cold despair of a Joseph Wood Krutch or a Bertrand Russell.

2. God comes to man's rescue with power from above. The book of Acts is the book of the Holy Spirit's power in men.

3. But man must prepare for the gift. We get it if we make the proper connections through sincere prayer and earnest seeking to obey God's will.

4. Power need not come in cataclysmic fashion as in sudden conversion. May be a slow and steady appropriation.

III. Retaining the power.

1. How pathetic the loss of power exhibited in weakened wills, waning enthusiasms, hauling-down of high ideals, cowardly compromises with evil, complacency. In every annual inventory the pastor can write on certain membership cards: "Exhibits symptoms of fatty degeneration of the soul."

2. St. Paul gives negative and positive words of advice on retaining the power from on high: a) "Quench not the spirit." Keep out the hindrances of sin; avoid short-circuits. b) "Walk

by the spirit." Keep close to God and use up each day's supply of power.

IV. Harnessing the power to life.

1. Mechanical power may be used selfishly and cruelly to destroy life. Our natural anxiety concerning this machine age is its threat to our spiritual values through misuse of mechanical power.

2. The Spirit's power must be used to give men "life more abundant." Use it in every sphere: achieving personal piety, overcoming temptation, enduring personal hardship, striving for social righteousness, building a world in which spiritual values are supreme.

May 22

"True Worth Is in Being, Not Seeming"

I Samuel 16: 7 "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

"Save the surface and you save all" is good paint advertisement but poor religion. True religion does not traffic in veneers. God's rebuke of Samuel.

I. The fact that "man looketh on the outward appearance" often has serious consequences.

1. Mad attempts to "keep up appearances" perhaps a large factor in present economic depression.

2. Moral penalties: hypocrisy, posing, worry, loss of independence, temptation to steal, etc.

II. The standards of men are not the standards of God.

1. We evaluate men in society by their stature, wealth, culture, popularity, success, cleverness, professional ability, etc.

2. We evaluate our church members by attendance, donations, peacefulness, reasonableness, etc.

3. But the sham of outer respectability has no standing with God who reads the heart. Only the pure in heart shall see God. Jesus condemns Pharisees for not cleansing inside of the cup.

4. The Judgment Day may present us with some startling surprises. "The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you."

III. The Christian permits the Holy Spirit to accomplish a thorough spiritual purification in him.

1. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

2. The pure heart must be kept pure. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

"Purer in heart, O God, help me to be, etc."

May 29

Compassion In Action

Luke 16: 19-31 Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

In the first scene we pity the beggar and detest the rich villain. In the second scene our sense of justice is satisfied: "Serves the rich scoundrel right!" But may we not stand self-condemned?

I. The sin of Dives.

1. Was it his wealth? No. Was not Abraham a wealthy man? Jesus had no ascetic or class prejudice against wealth. His concern was that it be rightly used.

2. Was it deliberate cruelty? No. He did not drive the beggar away.

3. It was his lack of compassion.

a) He used his wealth for self-display ("purple and fine linen") and for selfish indulgence ("fared sumptuously"). He thought only of himself and his equally "respectable" friends.

b) He saw Lazarus not as a fellow-man entitled to neighborly treatment but as a sort of sub-human derelict cut loose from all human claims.

c) He thus violated the fundamental principle that the strong must bear the burdens of the weak. The very fact of being in need entitles the weak to a claim upon the strong: Parable of Good Samaritan.

II. Dives and Lazarus in 1932.

1. Scene I of the drama often re-enacted. Recent news item: "Mr. Blank, president of the Blank Corporation, sat on his private yacht and matched $20-bills against pennies." In an editorial of the same paper: "Unless something is done, thousands of people will starve."

2. But compassion is required not only of wealthy. Church-member to pastor recently: "That sermon of yours on the Rich Man and Lazarus didn't fit our congregation, for we have no wealthy people." He had missed the point that compassion toward the weak is required of *all* who are stronger. Illustration of three attitudes toward the weaker: a) Selfishness. "What I have is mine. What you have is yours. Be satisfied." b) Unscrupulous acquisitiveness. "What I have is mine. What you have is mine if I can take it from you." c) Compassion. "What you have is yours. What I have is yours if you need it."

3. Compassion is more than mere pity or abstract well-wishing. Wealthy countess one cold night wept for poor beggar portrayed on stage. Returned to her coach to find her coachman, whom she had ordered to wait for her, frozen to death. Compassion is active goodness.

4. These days of depression compel the indictment of our whole economic system as incompassionate: "Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." Also compel us to seek ways of helping the weaker without hurting them.

5. Meanwhile, those indigent neighbors of ours, those underfed children on our street, those starving millions in China, etc.,—are we as Dives toward them?

June 5

The Tragedy of Good Excuses

Luke 14: 16-24 Parable of the Great Supper.

Each of the three invited guests had a "good" excuse for declining. Were not these men engaged in honest pursuits? And was the host's invitation of sufficient importance to allow those pursuits to be temporarily suspended? Then why a tragedy?

I. God's generous invitation.

1. God repeatedly represented by Jesus as inviting men to enter the Kingdom. Parables of Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Prodigal Son, Cruel Vinedressers, present parable.

2. God invites today through Bible, Sacraments, church, promptings of the Holy Spirit, voice of Christian friends. His evidences of love, etc.

II. Men's polite refusals.

1. Comparatively few people who refuse are convinced atheists or confirmed criminals.

2. Many people refuse simply because other things seem more important. They do not seek first the Kingdom. First come, as in this parable, interest in daily labor, business speculations, duties of home life, etc. Illustration: Musician held crowd on street corner spell-bound till market-bell rang; then all left but one man. Musician complimented him on having soul above mere merchandise so that market-bell could not draw him away. Man replied he was a bit hard of hearing and had not heard bell and immediately left also.

3. What we have time for reveals what we regard as most important. If a man says, "The church, etc., are good, but I can't find time for them," he betrays his low estimate of them.

III. The tragic results of refusals.

1. Shut out from the Kingdom! "None which were bidden shall taste of my supper." Their own refusal shut them out. Does not seem like tragedy to those who "make light of it" (Mt. 22: 5).

2. But this very self-complacency and pre-occupation are tragedy in themselves even apart from their consequences.

June 12

Accepting Christ's Challenge

Luke 9: 59 "Follow me."

I. Following the supreme leader.

1. Not "Follow a principle, a formula, a sign-post." Such an invitation unappealing.

2. But "Follow *me*." The genius of the Christian faith lies partly in its call to loyalty to a living personality rather than to dead principles.

3. This person is the supreme leader. He has gone before us. No general is greatly respected who commands from the safety of the rear. Christ's pre-eminent leadership in all spheres has remained unimpeachable through the centuries. Following Him is supremely worth-while.

II. Only heroes need apply.

1. "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest" is followed by "Take my yoke upon you." Luke 9: 57-62 admirably stresses Christ's insistence that only heroes, willing to bear His cross, need apply for membership in His ranks.

2. Contrast navy department's invitation to enlist with Christ's challenge to follow Him. Navy offers glamorous inducements: "Visit foreign countries, see strange sights, get paid for traveling." Jesus challenges: "Men shall revile you and persecute you." "Whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service." "Whosoever would be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me."

3. Are Christ's demands too severe? No. Consider how His disciples grieved Him repeatedly by indolence, selfishness, cowardice. Nor are they too severe today: morally impossible really to follow Jesus without courage, endurance, sacrifice in a world where dishonesty, selfishness, etc., prevail. Examples: A man lost position in dairy because he protested against practice of watering milk. A tenant was ejected by landlord because he voted for new school building which would increase landlord's taxes. We make mistake of teaching children that goodness, honesty, etc., are always rewarded by world; would better teach, "Be good, though you suffer for it."

4. The follower's reward is not wealth, fame, etc., for these may be denied him just because he is a follower, but the inner peace of companionship with Jesus and the satisfaction of being uncompromisingly loyal to the highest.

True disciples march under the ensign of the Cross. "Am I a soldier of the Cross, A follower of the Lamb?, etc."

June 19

Self-Criticism: A Rare Virtue

Romans 2: 1 "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."

"The pot called the kettle black" is a proverbial summary of our text. Censuring others is easy and pleasurable but pernicious; judging oneself is difficult and distasteful but morally profitable.

I. Our text forbids not judging but censoriousness.

1. We could not form standards of conduct for our own guidance without honesty judging good and evil in others.

2. Censoriousness, i. e., rash, unjust judgments resulting from an unlovely spirit, is forbidden as inwardly harmful to the censurer and outwardly harmful to the one censured. Thus understand also Christ's: "Judge not" and the saying about the mote and the beam.

II. Our text enjoins honest self-examination and self-criticism.

1. This is not inconsistent with a justifiable self-respect. "Love thy neighbor *as thyself.*" Kant's: "Treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only." A few people criticize themselves too severely and gain an inferiority complex.

2. Lack of critical self-judgment a common failing. Really difficult even with best intentions, for our motives are complex. But in broad outlines we know whether our motives and attitudes are pure, yet we shield ourselves from unpleasant self-criticism.

3. Selfishness and pride conspire against self-judgment. Unwilling to endure shame of exposure, we come gradually to excuse our weaknesses and vices and to hide them even from ourselves, and become, paradoxically, honest hypocrites. David's honest wrath against the rich man of Nathan's parable an excellent example of this.

4. Our text may be applied to groups as well as individuals: our church, nation, race, culture, etc. Examples: "The Negro is all right in his place." "God has showed his approval of our nation by blessing us above all other nations of the world." "The Anglo-Saxon is destined to rule the world."

5. Through self-criticism comes repentance, God's foregiveness, moral development, merciful judging of others.

June 26

Saving the Ends of the Earth

Isaiah 45: 22 "Turn unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

I. Our text is challenged by God's competitors.

1. Education sweeps over the world, and some educators declare with almost religious fervor: "Turn unto Education and be ye saved, etc."

2. Thus also inventions, trade and commerce, finance, professional sports, etc.

II. But only God, as revealed in Christ, can really save.

1. By "saved" is to be understood not merely bliss beyond grave but also a being-made-whole in this life, redemption from sin's power.

2. God's above-mentioned competitors for man's allegiance, however valuable, cannot save; indeed, they may increase man's misery if he has not God.

3. Human experience conclusively testifies to God's ability to save.

III. Yet God's competitors can teach God's worshipers the valuable lessons of zeal and whole-hearted loyalty.

1. How far the promoters of the Gospel lag behind the promoters of education, inventions, trade, finance, etc.! Where bankers, scientists, etc., go forth by thousands, Christian missionaries go forth by mere tens! Most nations are "civilized" scores of years before they are Christianized. We are put to shame!

2. Why that pitiful lag? Is it not that secretly we mistakenly value civilization's finery and comforts above spiritual welfare? For example, our reluctance to sacrifice luxuries to contribute to mission work betrays our distorted estimate of values.

3. Once become really convinced that only God, as revealed in Christ, can save, and that it profits us nothing to gain world and lose soul, and Christian missions will take their proper place.

4. Such zeal will involve sacrifice. Our "Let George do it" excuses must cease. Illustration: Mr. Judd, Student Volunteer speaker, was invited to bring mission appeal to a city women's missionary federation. Daughters of the women also present. After the address, the president, who had invited Mr. Judd, objected: "It's all right to make moderate appeals for missions, but you made your plea too strong. Why, you almost persuaded our own daughters to become missionaries!" We must be willing to sacrifice all,—daughters, sons, time, money, self.

Jesus to Peter: "From henceforth, *thou* shalt catch *men*."

Die Betätigung des christlichen Charakters gegenüber Gott.

Von Prof. Dr. R. H. Grützmacher.

I.

Ist das Wesen der Religion Verkehrsgemeinschaft Gottes mit den Menschen, so liegt die Aktivität zwar zunächst auf der Seite Gottes, aber sie ruft dann auch eine entsprechende Betätigung des Menschen hervor. Gott redet, der Mensch antwortet. Diese Antwort vollzieht sich am unmittelbarsten im Gebet. **Das Gebet ist die Form der sittlichen Aktivität des christlichen Charakters gegenüber Gott.** Sein Verständnis ist eine der hauptsächlichsten Aufgaben der theologischen Ethik. In ihren verschiedenen Systemen herrscht in der Wahl des Hauptgesichtspunktes bei der Behandlung des Gebetes keine Einheit. Richard Rothe sah in dem Gebet wesentlich nur ein Tugendmittel. Das Gebet soll die sittliche Kraft des Christen immer wieder stärken, indem es ihn mit der Urquelle seines neuen Lebens, Gott, in engste Verbindung setzt. Nach Schleiermacher und Ritschl ist das Gebet das wichtigste Mittel, um dem Menschen die Unterwerfung unter Gottes Vorsehung zu ermöglichen. Schickt diese schweres Leid, so wird es dem Menschen ertragbar durch betende Versenkung; wird ihm ein großes Glück zuteil, so bewahrt ihn ein Dankgebet vor Uebermut. Beide Auffassungsweisen beschreiben durchaus wichtige Folgen und Wirkungen eines echten Gebetes. Es stärkt die aktive Kraft und macht fähig zum Ertragen des von Gott gesandten Schicksales in jeder Form. Aber das Wesen des Gebetes besteht nicht in seinen nachträglichen und indirekten Wirkungen auf den Menschen, sondern in seiner direkten Beziehung auf Gott. Der Erlanger Hofmann hat es darum richtig als die Hauptform des unmittelbar auf Gott gerichteten sittlichen Handels verstanden, das kühn in die Transzendenz hinübergreift.

Das Gebet ist ein integrierender Bestandteil jeder lebendigen Religion. Es spielt darum eine außerordentliche Rolle in der **Religionsgeschichte.** Friedrich Heiler hat in seiner großen Monographie „Das Gebet" als innerstes Wesen der Religionsgeschichte verstehen gelehrt. Er zeigt das Bestehen zweier Haupttypen des Gebetes, in denen zwei grundverschiedene Frömmigkeitsrichtungen sich ausleben. Das **mystische Gebet,** das hauptsächlich in den indischen Religionen gepflegt wird, aber in der Mystik aller Zeiten auch in der christlichen wiederkehrt, hat seine Eigenart darin: „Das mystische Beten ist die Hinwendung der von Welt und eigener Leidenschaft losgelösten Seele zu Gott, dem höchsten und einzigen Wert. Von der Meditation steigt der betende Mystiker zu einer wonnevollen Contemplation des höchsten Gutes, bis sich zuletzt die

entzückte Gottesschau in die unendliche Seligkeit der Extase verliert, in welche der endliche Mensch untertaucht in der Fülle des unermeßlichen Gottes." Das **prophetische Gebet** dagegen, das besonders klar bei den großen israelitischen Propheten, bei Jesus, den Aposteln und Reformatoren zum Ausdruck gekommen ist, „ist im Unterschied vom mystischen ein naives Ausschütten des Herzens, schlichte Aussprache der drängenden Not und sehnsüchtigen Verlangens, Bitte um Erhörung, Hilfe, Gnade und Heil für sich und die Brüder." Nur diese letztere Betätigung ist im strengen Sinn Gebet, d. h. Verkehrsgemeinschaft mit einem persönlichen Gott, während das mystische Gebet richtiger als Kontemplation bezeichnet wird und auch bei einer pantheistischen, ja selbst atheistischen Weltanschauung möglich ist. Diese Grundstruktur des echten Gebetes setzt sich nach Heiler aus drei Elementen zusammen: „Der Glaube an den lebendigen persönlichen Gott, der Glaube an seine reale unmittelbare Präsenz und der dramatische Verkehr, in dem der Mensch auf den als gegenwärtig erlebten Gott trifft." Leitet somit schon die allgemeine religionsgeschichtliche Betrachtung — freilich mit Einschluß der biblischen Offenbarungsgeschichte — auf das **wahre Wesen des Gebetes als bewußten direkten Verkehr mit Gott,** so zeigt die außerchristliche Religionsgeschichte besonders deutlich auch die sittlichen **Verkehrungen, denen das Gebet unterliegen kann** und die auch in der Geschichte des christlichen Gebetslebens ihre Spuren hinterlassen haben.

Ist das Gebet in den heidnischen Religionen meist auf das Engste mit dem Opfer verknüpft und tritt es mehrfach wie z. B. im späteren Judentum geradezu an die Stelle des Opfers, so ist es begreiflich, daß man auch dem Gebet den Charakter einer die Gottheit befriedigenden Leistung, eines ihre Güte verdienenden, ja abkaufenden Werkes zugeschrieben hat. Diese Annahme hat dann auf die formale Gestaltung der Gebete eingewirkt. Nicht der freien und spontanen Aussprache, sondern festgeprägten, möglichst langen Formeln, die häufig zu wiederholen sind, wird die besondre Wirkung des Gebetes zugesprochen. Diese Züge der **Verdienstlichkeit,** des **Traditionalismus** und des **Mechanismus** hat das Gebet im Pharisäismus und Talmudismus gewonnen. Noch schroffer sind die im nördlichen Buddhismus in Tibet in Erscheinung getreten. Hier wird eine einzige Gebetsformel: „O du Kleinod in der Lotosblume" ununterbrochen wiederholt, aber nicht nur von menschlichen Lippen, sondern sie ist auch auf Papierstreifen niedergeschrieben, die von Gebetsmühlen in Bewegung gesetzt werden. Mit der Verderbung des Gebets hängt eine zweite noch schwerere zusammen. **Das Gebet wird zu einem Zaubermittel, zu einer magischen Handlung.** Ihr Wesen besteht darin, daß sich der Mensch eine unfehl-

bare Macht über Gott zutraut. Nur scheinbar ordnet er sich ihm unter, wie es die echte Religion verlangt, in Wirklichkeit will er mit seinem Gebet Gott kommandieren und die Erfüllung seiner Wünsche erzwingen. Diesen magischen Charakter der Gebete beobachtet man besonders bei den primitiven Völkern. Aber auch in einer so vergeistigten Religion wie der brahmanischen schimmert er deutlich hindurch. Bedeutete in ihr Brahma zunächst das menschliche Gebet, so wurde es später zur Bezeichnung der höchsten Gottheit als Ausdruck der Ueberzeugung, daß sich unter das Gebet auch alle Götter beugen müssen.

Wenden wir uns nunmehr dem **Alten und Neuen Testament** zu, so erscheint das Gebet als die spezifische Form der sittlichen Betätigung gegenüber Gott. Die Frommen beten alle. In dem Buch des Alten Testamentes, das die persönliche Beziehung der Seele zu Gott schildert, den Psalmen, ist alles Gebet, bald Dank für empfangene Güte, bald Bitte um zukünftige Gaben, aber auch Anbetung und Huldigung gegenüber Gott ohne jeden Wunsch. Der genauere Inhalt dieser Gebete spiegelt die Offenbarungsstufe wieder, auf der sie gebetet wurden. Neben den Bitten um innerliche Güter, wie Vergebung der Sünden und ein neues Herz und einen gewissen Geist, steht auch das Verlangen der Abwehr, ja Rache an den Feinden Gottes und des Volkes. — Im Neuen Testament erscheint **Jesus selbst als Beter** und zwar nicht nur dann und wann, sondern regelmäßig. Lukas 5, 16 berichtet als seine Gewohnheit, daß er sich in die Einsamkeit zurückzog, um anhaltend zu beten. Die entscheidenden Wendepunkte seines Lebens spiegeln sich in seinem Gebet wieder. Im hohenpriesterlichen Gebet faßt er sein Testament für die Welt in einem Gebet an Gott zusammen; in Gethsemane wird es ihm zum Mittel, sich dem Willen des Vaters zum Leiden und Sterben innerlich zu unterwerfen. Auch fast alle seine Worte am Kreuz sind Gebetsworte. So gibt Jesus persönlich ein Vorbild im Beten und außerdem in seiner Lehre besondre Anweisungen zum Gebet. Obwohl er feststellt, daß der Vater schon vor unsern Gebeten weiß, wessen wir bedürfen, verlangt er von seinen Jüngern Gebete und verheißt ihnen Erhörung. Auf die Bitte der Jünger gibt er ihnen als **Beispiel des rechten Betens das Vaterunser** (Lukas 11; Matth. 6, 9). Hier zeigt Jesus den rechten Inhalt, den ein Gebet haben soll. Zuerst hat sich der Mensch auch im Gebet um Gott zu kümmern, um die Heiligung seines Namens, das Geschehen seines Willens, das Kommen seines Reiches. Ist das geschehen, dann hat der Mensch auch ein Recht seine irdische Existenz und die dazu nötigen Mittel von Gott zu erwarten. Bedeutsamer als diese aber ist noch die Erhaltung seines geistlichen Wesens, zu der die Lösung von der Schuld, die Bewahrung vor

Versuchung und zuletzt die Befreiung von allem Uebel gehört. **Dieses Gebet ist von Jesus als Beispiel, nicht aber als gesetzliche Formel gegeben.** Die älteste christliche Gemeinde hat sich darum nicht ängstlich um seinen Wortlaut gesorgt, wie die verschiedene Ueberlieferung beweist; fehlen doch im Text des Lukas die dritte und die siebente Bitte und ist der lobpreisende Schluß im Urtext der beiden Evangelien nicht vorhanden. Zum rechten christlichen Beten des Vaterunsers gehört darum nicht seine äußerliche Wiederholung, sondern sein Verständnis — wie das aller Gebete — **„im Namen Jesu."** In den Abschiedsreden Joh. 16, 21. 24 gibt Jesus seinen Jüngern, die schon seit langem das Vaterunser gebetet hatten, die überraschende Erklärung, daß sie bisher noch niemals in seinem Namen gebetet hätten und dies erst in Zukunft tun würden. **Der Name Jesu ist im biblischen Sinn die Bezeichnung für die vollendete Offenbarung seines Wesens.** Diese aber war in jener Stunde, wo Jesus das Vaterunser gab, noch nicht vollendet; sie ist es erst durch Kreuz und Auferstehung. Jetzt erst ist das Wesen des christlichen Gottes als des Erlösers klar geworden, jetzt erst deutlich, wodurch seine vergebende Herrschaft zustande gekommen ist. Mit diesem Gehalt hat sich alles christliche Beten einschließlich des Vaterunsers zu erfüllen. Aus dem Gebet im Namen Jesu wurde folgerichtig das **Gebet zu Jesus.** Dieses konnte erst einsetzen, als Jesus wieder nach seiner Himmelfahrt in die Sphäre Gottes aufgenommen war. Sobald das geschehen war, begannen einzelne Christen wie der Märtyrer Stephanus, bald aber auch die ganze Gemeinde Jesus im Gebet anzurufen (Apg. 7, 60; 1. Kor. 1, 2; Offb. 5, 8; 22, 20).

Den zahlreichen übrigen Stellen des Neuen Testaments entnehmen wir, daß das christliche Gebet sowohl **Dank** für empfangene Gaben wie **Bitte** um neue Wirkungen Gottes ist. Es kann sich ebenso auf die Bedürfnisse des natürlichen, wie des geistlichen Lebens beziehen. Seine **Erhörung** wird sich jedoch nicht immer in den Formen vollziehen, wie sie der Mensch erwartet. Paulus hatte immer wieder um Befreiung von seinem „Pfahl im Fleisch" — wohl einer leiblichen Krankheit — gefleht, aber ihm war immer wieder die Antwort geworden, die auch eine Erhörung bedeutete: Laß dir an meiner Gnade genügen, denn meine Kraft ist in den Schwachen mächtig. — Wenn 1. Thess. 5, 17 ein ununterbrochenes Beten verlangt wird, so ist darunter nicht eine stete äußere und bewußte Aussprache von Gebeten zu verstehen, sondern ein Zustand steter Gebetsfähigkeit der bei gegebenem Anlaß sofort in einzelne Gebete übergehen kann.

Auf Grund dieser biblischen Aussagen, wie der lebendigen religiösen Erfahrungen, die in den kirchlichen Bekenntnisschriften, aber

auch den persönlichen Werken der Reformatoren enthalten ist, ergibt sich für das christliche Gebet die Wesensbestimmung: **Das Gebet ist die sittliche Hauptform der bewußten und direkten Aktivität des Menschen auf Gott. Sie dankt zunächst stets für empfangene göttliche Gaben, erbittet aber auch — erhörungsgewiß — neue. Inhalt des Gebetes vermag alles zu werden, was der Entstehung und dem Fortbestand des christlichen Charakters dient in der richtigen Abstufung der Werte für denselben.**

II.

Der sittlich-religiöse Erfolg des Gebetes besteht zunächst für den Menschen in der Erschließung und Zugänglichmachung objektiv schon vorhandener göttlicher Wirklichkeiten für seine Subjektivität. Diese Erkenntnis hat besonders Luther in der Erklärung der drei ersten Bitten des Vaterunser deutlich gemacht. Er stellt hier fest, daß Gottes Name geheiligt, Gottes Wille getan, Gottes Reich kommt „auch ohn unser Gebet." Er verwirft damit deutlich die Abhängigmachung Gottes von unserm Gebet. Dieses hat nur den Zweck, daß die göttliche Wirklichkeit auch zu uns komme, sein Wille auch bei uns und durch uns geschehe. So war der Erfolg des Gethsemanegebetes nur der, daß der längst vorhandene Vaterwille, der Erlöser müsse leiden, auch von Jesus persönlich angeeignet und zu seinem eigenen Willen wurde. Das Gebet macht uns fähig schon vorhandenen Gotteswillen uns innerlich anzueignen.

Auf der andern Seite aber ist es auch — nach Schrift und Erfahrung — **Zweck des Gebetes, neue Willensakte Gottes zu erbitten und auf geistlichem wie auf natürlichem Gebiet hervorzurufen.** Bestanden die Haupttugenden des christlichen Charakters in Glaube und Liebe, so wird der Beter erwarten, daß ihm Gott durch seine Bitte den Glauben stärke oder ihm auf diesem Weg erst die Kraft gebe, seinen Feind zu lieben. Nicht minder sind die prophetischen Persönlichkeiten der Ueberzeugung, daß menschliches Gebet auch göttliche Einwirkungen im leiblichen Leben hervorrufen könne. Luther hat bei einer schweren Erkrankung Melanchthons Gott solange bestürmt, bis wider alle Erwartung Genesung eintrat und diesen Erfolg auf sein Gebet zurückgeführt. **Naive und lebendige Religiosität rechnet mit einer Wechselwirkung zwischen Gott und Mensch.** Sie will zwar Gott nicht zwingen, erwartet aber, daß er auf menschliche Anregung ebenso eingeht, wie ein Vater auf die Wünsche seiner Kinder. **Aus dieser Ueberzeugung von einer Einwirkung menschlicher Gebete auf Gottes Verhalten ergeben sich allerdings für das verstandesmäßige Denken außerordentliche Schwierigkeiten.** Gehört es geradezu zum Wesen Gottes als der Ewige unveränderlich zu sein, so wird bei der Gebetsbeeinflussung mit seiner Veränderlichkeit gerechnet. Weiter erhebt sich die Schwierig-

keit, wie Gott scheinbar auf gegensätzliche Gebete — etwa kriegführender Völker für den Sieg ihrer Heere — reagieren soll. Demgegenüber wird man entweder bei der Paradoxie, der Unvereinbarkeit der verschiedenen, gleichberechtigten Tatsachen stehen bleiben oder nach einer lösenden spekulativen Formel suchen. Bei dem ersteren Standpunkt kann man auf die allgemeine Spannung zwischen Ewigkeit und Zeit, Sein und Werden verweisen, die trotzdem nebeneinander bestehen. So ist Gott als der Ewige unveränderlich, als der in der Zeit sich Offenbarende veränderlich. Als dem Uebergeschichtlichen kommt Gott unveränderliches Sein zu, als der Geschichtliche geht er in die Geschichte und damit in ein sich veränderndes Werden ein.

Von einem spekulativ metaphysischen Standpunkt aus könnte man behaupten, daß von Gott schon in der Ewigkeit der Zusammenhang seiner Willensbetätigung und der sie hervorrufenden menschlichen Gebete geknüpft ist. **In den göttlichen Weltplan sind vor aller Zeit auch unsre Gebete als wirkende Faktoren aufgenommen.** Wie die Naturgesetze ihre tiefste Begründung nicht in der Folge zeitlicher Ursache und Wirkung haben, sondern in ihrer ewigen Setzung durch Gott, so hat Gott auch den Zusammenhang zwischen unsern Gebeten und seinen Wirkungen in den Plan der Schöpfung und Erlösung von vornherein aufgenommen. — Allein auch solche spekulative Gedanken geben Anlaß zu neuen Bedenken und Fragen und sind zudem kaum geeignet die Lebendigkeit und Unmittelbarigkeit des Gebetslebens zu fördern. **Darum wird sich der schlichte christliche Charakter am Besten an die Tatsache halten, daß Gott seine Gebete will und diese auch für das göttliche Verhalten von wirklicher Bedeutung sind.**

III.

Nach Erledigung der prinzipiellen Fragen über Wesen und Wirkung des Gebetes erheben sich noch einige weitere, die unter ethischem Gesichtspunkt in die **konkrete Gebetspraxis** eingreifen. Ist das Gebet der bewußte Verkehr des Menschen mit Gott, so wird es sich in der Regel in **klare Worte** fassen. Mindestens werden sich im Innern bestimmte Wortbilder gestalten, auch wenn diese bei stillem Gebet nicht zu lauter Aussprache kommen. Im Unterschied zum mystisch-ekstatischen Gebetstypus zeichnet sich der prophetische dadurch aus, daß er bestimmte Gedanken und ihnen entsprechende Worte vor die göttliche Majestät bringt. Darum widerspricht ihm auch nicht der Gebrauch **bestimmt formulierter Gebete,** wie sie etwa in den Psalmen, dem Vaterunser, der kirchlichen Liturgie und dem Gesangbuch gegeben sind. Es gibt für die Christen aller Zeiten und Orte soviel gemeinsame und wiederkehrende Anliegen, daß der Eine die Gebete des Andern mit innerer Wahrhaftigkeit nachspre-

chen kann. Der einfache Christ lernt sogar erst aus den Gebeten großer prophetischer Persönlichkeiten, was er alles von Gott erbitten darf. Auf der andern Seite bestehen auch **ethische Gefahren in dem einfachen Nachsprechen vorhandener Gebete.** Man hat das Vaterunser einen der größten Märtyrer aller Zeiten genannt, weil es so oft durch gedankenlosen Gebrauch erniedrigt wird. Infolgedessen wird der christliche Charakter seinen Gebeten auch einen persönlichen Inhalt und eine individuelle Form zu geben haben. Das Ideal ist die **Verknüpfung von übernommenem und eigenem Gebet,** etwa die Ausfüllung der entsprechenden Vaterunserbitten mit konkreter Lebensnot und besonderen Versuchungen des Einzelnen.

Für die Praxis erhebt sich die weitere Frage, ob Gebete nur ganz spontan aus dem Innern des Menschen bei besonderen Anlässen hervorbrechen sollen oder ob sie auch auf äußere Anregung regelmäßig **zu bestimmter Zeit** zu sprechen sind. Der Muhammedanismus kennt täglich fünf wiederkehrende Gebetszeiten; auch für den katholischen Priester und erst recht den Mönch sind sogenannte Horengebete streng vorgeschrieben. Bei diesen Bestimmungen liegt die Gefahr einer gewissen Mechanisierung nicht fern, und der evangelische Christ wird sich an eine solche Reglementierung nicht unter allen Umständen binden. Anderseits aber ist die Naturordnung, die es Morgen und Abend werden läßt, und die Sitte, die den Menschen zu bestimmter Zeit speisen läßt, doch auch eine Gottesordnung. Sie enthält begründete Motive, Gott in der Frühe um Kraft zur Arbeit, des Abends um Schutz für die Nacht zu bitten, bei Genuß des täglichen Brotes für seinem Empfang zu danken. **Das sittliche Ideal bleibt immer die Verbindung von Freiheit und Festigkeit.** Unterdrückt die Festigkeit die innere Freiheit, dann ist sie kühn zu durchbrechen und auf die Regelmäßigkeit eines äußerlich gewordenen Betens zu verzichten. Entsteht aus der Freiheit eine Vernachlässigung des Verkehrs mit Gott, so können feste Sitten eine wirksame Erinnerung an ihn werden.

War bisher das Gebet als eine individuelle Angelegenheit des einzelnen Christen verstanden, so wird es doch auch zu einer **sozialen Betätigung.** Die Familie findet sich beim häuslichen Tischgebet zusammen, das Volk eint sich bei großen Entscheidungen — etwa bei Beginn von Krieg und Frieden — im Gebet. Vor allem aber sind Gebete ein Hauptbestandteil des christlichen Gemeindegottesdienstes, der hier nur unter ethischen, aber nicht liturgischen Gesichtspunkten interessiert. **Bei gemeinschaftlichen Gebeten werden feste Formeln zu bevorzugen sein.** Schon der erste Clemens-Brief bietet in seinen Schlußkapiteln ein allgemeines Kirchengebet und alle großen Kirchen haben seitdem in der Regel feste Formulare in ihren Gottesdiensten gebraucht. Diese bringen gewiß — beson-

ders bei öfterer Wiederholung — die Gefahr mit sich, daß die Hörer ermüden und nicht innerlich mitbeten. Hier kann eine Abwechslung und Verwendung des reichen Gebetschatzes der Kirche Abhilfe schaffen. Bei ganz besonderen Anlässen mag auch ein freies Gebet an die Stelle treten. **Gegen die absolut freien Gebete,** die einzelne christlichen Gemeinschaften zum Prinzip erhoben haben, **bestehen dagegen große ethische Bedenken.** Jene gewinnen nicht selten einen so individuellen Charakter, daß die Hörer die Bitten nicht als die ihren zu empfinden vermögen, während die sie bewegenden Nöte übergangen sind. Vor allen Dingen aber kann das freie Gebet, gerade wenn die Absicht besteht, möglichst „erhörlich" zu beten, gekünstelte und unerfreuliche Züge annehmen. Quantität tritt an die Stelle der Qualität, Länge ersetzt Tiefe. Ja es kann sogar natürliche Eitelkeit und menschliche Rethorik im Gebet glänzen wollen, und es dadurch als die höchste Form des Verkehrs mit Gott entweihen.

Goethe und sein Verhältnis zum Christentum.

Zu seinem hundertjährigen Todestag am 22. März 1832.

Dr. C. Schieler.

Unter den unzähligen Abhandlungen, die über Goethes, des großen deutschen Dichterfürsten, Leben und Dichten zur Feier seines hundertjährigen Todestages geschrieben und gedruckt werden, darf eine solche über sein Verhältnis zum Christentum nicht fehlen. Auch darüber ist schon sehr viel geredet und geschrieben worden. Ganz erklärlich! Ist es doch für einen jeden Christen eine Frage von nicht geringer Bedeutung: wie stellte sich unser größter Dichter, dessen Werke unter allen zivilisierten Nationen der Erde verbreitet sind, zum Christentum, zum Glauben an Gott, an Jesus Christus, sein Evangelium und Kirche? Aber die Ansichten hierüber gehen weit auseinander. Manche wollen diese Fragen nur aus Aeußerungen des Dichters beantworten, die in seinen vielen Werken, poetischer und prosaischer Natur, zerstreut sich finden. Dadurch konnten sie nicht zu einem der Wahrheit entsprechenden Urteil kommen. Eine viel wichtigere Quelle hierfür sind die Briefe des Dichters, insbesondere seine Gespräche mit vertrauten Freunden, geistreichen, strebenden Männern und Frauen seiner Tage. In Briefen an vertraute Personen und in Unterhaltung mit solchen gibt der Mensch seine innerste Gedankenwelt zwanglos kund. Beide Quellen müssen wir vereinigen, des Dichters Aeußerungen über die höchsten Fragen des Lebens objektiv betrachten, von des Dichters und nicht von unserm Standpunkt aus sie erfassen, um zu einem richtigen Urteil zu gelangen. Es ist ja ganz natürlich: die Kirchlichen möchten doch nicht einen solchen Geisteshelden verlieren, und die Unkirchlichen frohlocken, einen solchen Zeugen ihrer Gesinnung zu haben; die Pantheisten spinozaischer Richtung erklären freudigen Stolzes voll: er gehörte zu uns, und Atheisten wollen ihn als Gesinnungsgenossen reklamieren. Er war ein Heide, wie wir sind, rufen sie, obgleich getauft und im Christentum erzogen, in christlicher Atmosphäre, in christlichem Haus. Gehen wir näher darauf ein!

Man darf sagen, daß die Beantwortung unsrer Frage: „In welchem Verhältnis stand Goethe zum Christentum" bis in unsre Tage mit einer gewissen Leidenschaft behandelt wurde. Auf der einen Seite sind es die aufrichtigen und entschiedenen Bekenner des Christentums, die sich aber in zwei Fraktionen spalten: die einen sehen in Goethe nichts als Heiden, in seinen Werken nichts als Heidentum, in der Beschäftigung mit seinen Dichtungen und der Liebe zu denselben nichts als heidnischen, und, was mehr ist, widerchristlichen Kultus des Genius; die andern wollen den großen

Dichter der Nation, mit dem sie sich durch tausend geistige Bande verknüpft, mit dem sie sich in wesentlichen geistigen Momenten **Eins** fühlen, nicht preisgeben und bemühen sich angelegentlichst und ängstlichst, sein Christentum zu retten. Stellen, Ausdrücke und Worte sucht man aus seinen Werken und Briefen zusammen, in denen von Gott, von Christus und dem Christentum die Rede ist, oder auch nur ein entfernter Anklang vorhanden ist, um einen sozusagen juristisch dokumentierten Beweis dafür zu führen: Goethe war doch ein Christ. — Auf der andern Seite befinden sich recht viele, solche, die dem historischen, zumal dem kirchlichen Christentum fremd geworden sind, sei es nun, daß ihnen das Christentum, wenn auch nicht in der **Tat,** doch noch **als Lehre** etwas gilt, oder daß sie scharfsinnig, mutig und ehrlich genug gewesen sind, den angefangenen Prozeß bis zu Ende durchzudenken, mithin auch die Lehre des Christentums im modernen Bewußtsein für aufgehoben zu erklären, die Religion in die Anthropologie zu verweisen und die Politik als ihre Religion zu bekennen. Diese beiden Klassen unsrer Mitmenschen berufen sich fast sämtlich auf die größten Geister des Jahrhunderts, auf Goethe und Schiller, als ihre Autoritäten, daß es mit dem positiven Christentum nichts sei, daß aber die **allgemeine Religion,** das sogenannte Wesen dessen, was sie für Christentum halten (Gott, Tugend und Unsterblichkeit) bei Goethe und etwas mehr bei Schiller in reicher Fülle zu finden sei; Goethe habe sich ja im Pantheismus wohlgefühlt. Es wäre nun vergebliche Mühe, sich mit denjenigen der letzten und auch der ersten Klasse auseinanderzusetzen. Tatsache ist es, und diese wollen wir betonen, daß eine **Dissonanz** zwischen dem Christentum, und nicht bloß dem kirchlichen, und unsern großen Dichter vorhanden ist. Diese Tatsache mag uns als treuen, überzeugten Anhängern und Dienern des Christentums unlieb sein, hinwegzuleugnen ist sie nicht; man mag auch recht zahlreiche Stellen aus den Werken und Briefen und Gesprächen des Dichters zusammentragen, in welchen Hochachtung und Verehrung für Christus und sein Evangelium zum Ausdruck kommen, andre Stellen schwächen bedenklich ab oder widersprechen. Ein deutscher Professor, und wie es scheint ein Goethekenner, hat in neuester Zeit viele Aussprüche Goethes zusammengetragen, um zu beweisen, daß es mit des Dichters christlicher Gesinnung schlecht bestellt gewesen sei. Ein Jesuit (Baumgarten), Literarhistoriker im Nebenberuf, stellt Goethe als waschechten Heiden dar und alle Freunde und Gönner der „Gesellschaft Jesu" oder Jesuiten sagen dazu Ja und Amen und warnen vor dem „alten Heiden von Weimar"; seine Schriften seien Gift für die Jugend usw. Vor einigen Jahren wallfahrtete eine kleine auserwählte Gesellschaft, kommend von dem Monistenkongreß in Hamburg, zu ihrem gefeierten, ver-

götterten Oberhaupt, dem Professor Häckel in Jena, der neben dem „Dichterphilosophen" Nietzsche der gehässigste Feind Jesu und des Christentums war (siehe seine „Welträtsel"). Sie legten ihm die Frage vor, ob er denn ganz ohne Religion und Gegner jeglicher Religion sei. Der Gelehrte antwortete: So ganz ohne Religion könne er doch nicht sein, er huldige der Religion Goethes: Natur ist Gott, Gott-Natur! So erzählte mir ein Teilnehmer.

Sehr beachtenswert und für den Widerstreit der Meinungen in diesem Punkt scheinen mir folgende Auslassungen des Literarhistorikers Vilmar zu sein. „Fragen wir," schreibt er, „ob nicht trotz der Stürme, welche die Oberfläche bewegen und in unruhigen Wogen auf und niedertreiben, dennoch etwa in der Tiefe des Elements, wohin das stumme Auge nicht reicht, eine Ruhe und Stille herrsche, welcher die Stürme der Zeit nichts anzuhaben vermochten; fragen wir, ob die aus der Tiefe herausgewachsene Dichterblüte gleich der Wasserlilie, die von den Wellen hin- und hergeschaukelt wird, nicht auch nur von mancherlei Gedankenwogen und Gedankenstürmen auf- und niedergetrieben werde, mit ihren Wurzeln aber festgewachsen sei auf dem ewigen Grund, der gelegt ist, ehe denn der Welt Grund gelegt war? Fester gewachsen, tiefer gewurzelt als die schwankende Blüte, die ihr Haupt kaum über Wasser zu halten vermag, selbst sich bewußt war? Fragen wir, ob wir nicht, die wir selber hin- und hergeschleudert werden auf der Oberfläche des Zeitmeeres, an dem Schaft dieser aus der Tiefe aufgestiegenen Lilie hinabgleitend, selber zu dem Grund gelangen können, auf dem wir festen Fuß zu fassen vermögen, und ob wir nicht vielleicht alsdann an den Wurzeln der Pflanze die Perle finden, welche köstlicher ist als alle Schätze, die in den Schiffen und Schifflein hin und her geführt werden über die unsichere Woge? Könnten diese Fragen bejaht werden, dann wäre der kleine Streit abgetan, der mit einzelnen Zitaten und Stellen und Worten geführt wird, und für immer vorbei: die Parteien wären zwar nicht vereinigt, aber geschieden. Und ich glaube, daß diese Fragen bejaht werden **können**, ich glaube, daß sie bejaht werden **müssen**." Wer hat aber diesen inneren Prozeß des Werdens und Vergehens in seinem geistigen Leben und Streben noch nicht erfahren? Warum sollte nicht bei einem Goethe, der doch bei all seiner überragenden Geistesgröße Mensch gewesen, dies der Fall gewesen sein?

Auch sollte man nicht vergessen, daß Goethe **ein Abbild der Welt**, daß er **Welt** ist, in biblischem Sinn gemeint, ist Welt und bleibt Welt. Als er einst (1772) bei einem Diner zu Coblenz zwischen dem frommen Pastor Lavater und Basedow, einem Freund, saß, erklärte Lavater einem Freund die Geheimnisse der Offenbarung Johannis und Basedow suchte einem Tanzmeister zu be-

weisen, daß die Kindertaufe sich nicht mehr für unsre Zeiten zieme; da sagte Goethe:

„Prophete rechts, Prophete links
Das Weltkind in der Mitten" —

und verzehrte ganz behaglich einen Rheinsalm und darnach einen Hahn.

Ein Weltkind, ein von Gott hochbegabtes Weltkind war er und wäre er es nicht gewesen, so hätte er in der Literatur nicht das geleistet, was er geschaffen, und das setzte nicht bloß dazumal und einige Zeit nach seinem Tod die gebildete Welt in Staunen, es erregt noch jetzt, hundert Jahre nach seinem Tod die Bewunderung nicht etwa bloß eines engeren Kreises gelehrter Leute, nein, man darf sagen: der Welt. Kann ein solches Weltkind nicht auch ein Christ sein? Wir finden zahlreiche, überraschend erfreuliche Aussprüche von ihm über das Christentum, über die Bibel, über Gott, aber man darf nicht allzugünstige Schlüsse aus denselben herauspressen. Das war indessen Goethes Natur: er gab nur dem in seinen Schriften und Gesprächen Ausdruck, was ihn im Innern bewegte. Mit Lavater verband ihn einige Zeit innige Freundschaft; er nannte ihn lieber Bruder, bat ihn um Gebet, daß Gott ihn beschützen möge. Da schrieb er (29. September 1779): „Ich bin ein sehr irdischer Mensch; mir ist das Gleichnis vom ungerechten Hausvater, vom verlornen Sohn, vom Säemann, von der Perle, vom Groschen usw. göttlicher (wenn je was Göttliches da sein soll) als die sieben Botschafter, Leuchter, Hörner, Siegel, Sterne und Wehe (anspielend auf die Offenbarung). Ich denke auch aus der Wahrheit zu sein, aber aus der Wahrheit der fünf Sinne, und Gott habe Geduld mit mir, wie bisher." Bezeichnend ist auch, daß seine anfangs so warme Freundschaft mit Lavater mehr und mehr erkaltete je mehr er sich dem Christentum entfremdete. Es konnte in Goethe ein Zwiespalt mit dem Christentum sein, eine Erkaltung, Entfremdung, aber nie eine Feindschaft oder auch nur Geringachtung. Das Psychische ist seine Sphäre, das Naturhafte, der Mensch mit seinem Walten und Weben, Fehlen und Fallen, Schwachheit und Stärke, Lust und Leid. Sünde, Reue und Schuld weiß er ergreifend zu schildern. „Und ihr werdet sein wie Gott und wissen, was gut und böse ist," — und er wußte es. Auch bei ihm ist der Tod der Sünde Sold.

„Ach, ich bin des Treibens müde!
Was soll all der Schmerz und Lust!
Süßer Friede,
Komm, ach komm in meine Brust!"

Ist wohl ein weltlicher Dichter je so nahe an die Schwelle des göttlichen Heiligtum getreten und hat so tiefe Blicke hinein

getan? Aber über die Schwelle trat er nicht. „Ihn schreckte die Forderung."

„Was sucht ihr, mächtig und gelind,
Ihr Himmelstöne, mich am Staube?
Klingt dort umher, wo weiche Menschen sind.
Die Botschaft hör ich wohl, allein mir fehlt der Glaube;
Das Wunder ist des Glaubens liebstes Kind.
Zu jenen Sphären wag ich nicht zu streben,
Woher die holde Nachricht tönt . . . . ."

(Aus Faust I, da er die Osterglocken die Auferstehung des Herrn verkünden hörte.)

Und wieder heißt es:

„Aus dieser Erde quillen meine Freuden,
Und diese Sonne scheinet meinen Leiden;
Kann ich mich erst von ihnen scheiden,
Dann mag, was will und kann geschehn
Davon will ich nichts weiter hören,
Ob man auch künftig haßt und liebt
Und ob es auch in jenen Sphären
Ein Oben und ein Unten gibt."

Und überblicken wir den Lebensgang Goethes, so finden wir in demselben gar manche Züge und Episoden, die „menschlich, allzu menschlich" sind, vieles, das des Großen unwürdig ist, wie er immer neue Herzen bestricken und verlassen, immer neue Bande knüpfen und lösen konnte. Ja, wenn wir Goethe mehrmals geradezu der guten Sitte Hohn sprechen (man denke an seine Ehe!) und in einer Weise sich gehen lassen sehen, die er selber Liederlichkeit nennt, erregt es noch Staunen, wenn wir in seinen Epigrammen Aussprüchen begegnen, die lästerlich klingen, und wenn er sich dem frommen Lavater gegenüber wiederholt als „dezidierter Nichtchrist" bezeichnet? Was er Faust bekennen läßt, ist sein eignes Bekenntnis:

„Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;
Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust,
Sich an die Welt, mit klammernden Organen;
Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust
Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen."

Nach diesen mehr allgemeinen Erörterungen wollen wir

Aeußerungen Goethes

in den Bereich unsrer Betrachtung ziehen.

Was zuerst die **Gottesvorstellung Goethes** betrifft, so ist vor allen zu beachten, daß er den **rein individuellen Charakter** einer solchen Vorstellung scharf betont:

„Wie einer ist, so ist sein Gott;
Darum ward Gott so oft zum Spott." (Gedichte.)

„Im Innern ist ein Universum auch,
Daher der Völker löblicher Gebrauch,
Daß jeglicher das Beste, was er kennt,
Er Gott, ja seinen Gott benennt,
Ihm Himmel und Erden übergibt,
Ihn fürchtet und womöglich liebt." (Gedichte.)

Es war aber der Natur und Denkweise des Dichters entsprechend, daß er weniger auf das Wesen als auf die Lebensäußerungen, „die Manifestationen" der Gottheit sein Augenmerk richtete. Er sagt: „Vom Absoluten in theoretischem Sinn mag ich nicht zu reden; behaupten darf ich aber, daß wer es in der Erscheinung anerkannt und immer im Auge behalten hat, sehr großen Gewinn davon erfahren wird" (Sprüche). Und darum urteilt er auch: **„Ich glaube einen Gott**; dies ist ein schönes, löbliches Wort; **aber Gott anerkennen, wo und wie er sich offenbare, das ist eigentlich die Seligkeit auf Erden"** (Sprüche). Ein herrliches Bekenntnis Gottes hat er in den Versen ausgedrückt:

„Im Namen dessen, der sich selbst erschuf,
Von Ewigkeit in schaffendem Beruf;
In seinem Namen, der den Glauben schafft,
Vertrauen, Liebe, Tätigkeit und Kraft;
In jenes Namen, der so oft genannt,
Dem Wesen nach blieb immer unbekannt:
Soweit das Ohr, soweit das Auge reicht,
Du findest nur Bekanntes, das ihm gleicht,
Und deines Geistes höchster Feuerflug,
Hat schon am Gleichnis, hat am Bild genug."
(Gedichte.)

Die „Doppelingredienzien des Universums," Geist und Materie, werden ihm „Stellvertreter Gottes." (An Knebel, 8. April 1812.) Ueber Gott selbst wird, außer dem **Schaffen**, das von Ewigkeit ihm zugeschrieben wird, nichts ausgesagt. Auf das **Wirken** kommt es ihm an, nicht auf das **Sein**. Sehr offen schreibt Goethe (an Jakobi, 6. Januar 1813): „Ich für mich kann bei den mannigfaltigen Richtungen meines Wesens nicht an einer Denkweise genug haben; als Dichter und Künstler bin ich Polytheist, Pantheist dagegen als Naturforscher, und eines so entschieden als das andre. Bedarf ich eines Gottes für meine Persönlichkeit als sittlicher Mensch, so ist dafür auch schon gesorgt."

Kann man, darf man aus dieser freimütigen Erklärung ableiten, Goethe sei ein Pantheist, ein Spinozist, gewesen? Nur Vor-

eingenommenheit kann dies behaupten. Goethes Gottesvorstellung hat nichts mit Pantheismus zu tun, welchen er selber nur als Naturforscher sich zuschreibt und mit dem man ungerechtfertigter Weise so oft die Gesamtheit Goethischer Weltanschauung hat identifizieren wollen. „Aber selbst jene pantheistische Vorstellung, welche Gott nicht als Persönlichkeit der Natur gegenüberstellt, sondern ihn in derselben leben und wirken läßt, ist, wo sie bei Goethe sich findet, nicht eine derartige, daß sie zu den Postulaten des Individuums als des ‚sittlichen Menschen' in Widerspruch träte; denn die von Gott erfüllte Natur wird in ihrer Gesamtheit aufgefaßt als bestimmt der sittlichen Entwicklung dienstbar zu sein." (Otto Harnack.) Es ist von großem Interesse, daß Goethe den § 86 der „Kritik der Urteilskraft," in dem Kant seine Gottesvorstellung in der Form des Postulates entwickelt, in seinem Exemplar mit der handschriftlichen Randnote „Optime" versehen hat. Daß Goethe eine persönliche Gottesvorstellung geglaubt hat, ergibt sich unzweifelhaft daraus, daß er den in der Natur wirksamen Gott zugleich als die höchste Vernunft gedacht hat: „Ich frage nicht, ob dieses höchste Wesen Verstand und Vernunft habe, sondern ich fühle, es ist der Verstand, die Vernunft selber. Alle Wesen sind davon durchdrungen, und der Mensch hat davon so viel, daß er Teile des Höchsten erkennen kann." (Mit Eckermann, 23. Februar 1831.) Das Walten dieses höchsten Wesens empfindet er als fortwährende Aeußerung der höchsten Liebe. In ergreifenden Versen hat er dies durch den „pater profundus" im Schlußakt des Faust ausgedrückt:

„Sind Liebesboten, sie verkünden,
Was ewig schaffend uns umwallt.
Mein Innres mög es auch entzünden,
Wo sich der Geist, verworren, kalt,
Verquält in stumpfer Sinne Schranken,
Scharf angeschloßnem Kettenschmerz.
O Gott! beschwichtige die Gedanken,
Erleuchte mein bedürftig Herz!"

Wenn Goethe nun einmal sich selbst einen Heiden nennt („du bist übler dran als wir Heiden") oder auch Atheisten („ich halte mich fest und fester an die Gottesverehrung des Atheisten — Spinoza — und überlasse euch alles was ihr Religion heißt und heißen müßt"), so gehören solche Aeußerungen einer früheren Periode an, sind beeinflußt von besonderen Stimmungen und Erlebnissen; auch Goethe mußte durch die Schule des Lebens gehen und ein Ergebnis war, daß seine Stellung zu Gott und dem Christentum klarer, bestimmter, inniger wurde; die religiös-christlichen Eindrücke seiner Jugendzeit, verdunkelt und zurückgedrängt durch Erfolge in der Welt, lebten wieder auf, wurden verklärt. Der

Goethe in der Epoche seiner Vollendung war, was sein Geistesleben betrifft, doch ein andrer als der Goethe in den Jahren der Entwicklung, wie es bei den meisten geistig strebenden Menschen der Fall ist.

Was dachte Goethe von **Jesus Christus?** Diese Frage müssen wir noch beantworten. In der Person Jesu Christi verehrte er **die göttliche Offenbarung des höchsten Prinzips der Sittlichkeit.** „Sobald man die reine Liebe und Lehre Jesu, sowie sie ist, wird begriffen und in sich eingelebt haben, so wird man sich als Mensch groß und frei fühlen." — „Fragt man mich, ob es in meiner Natur sei, ihm anbetende Verehrung zu erweisen, so sage ich: ‚Durchaus'." (Mit Eckermann, 1. April 1827 und 11. März 1832.) Die Wirksamkeit Christi schildert er mit den Worten: „Indem er das Niedere zu sich heraufzieht, indem er die Unwissenden, die Armen, die Kranken seiner Weisheit, seines Reichtums, seiner Kraft teilhaftig werden läßt und sich deshalb ihnen gleich zu stellen scheint, so verleugnet er doch auf der andern Seite nicht seinen göttlichen Ursprung; er wagt sich Gott gleich zu stellen, ja, sich selbst für Gott zu erklären." (Wanderjahre 24.) Die christliche Religion ist in der Person Jesu „göttlich verkörpert" (Ebenda), die „Hoheit" der Person Christi ist „so göttlicher Art, wie das Göttliche nur je auf Erden erschienen ist." (Mit Eckermann a. a. O.) Metaphysische Bestimmungen über die göttliche und menschliche Natur Jesu mußten der rein auf das Praktische gerichteten Denkweise Goethes völlig fern liegen. Auch dem Leiden Christi zollte er gebührende Hochachtung und Verehrung.

Hochbejahrt sagte er zu Eckermann: „Ist ein wirkliches Bedürfnis zu einer großen Reform in einem Volk vorhanden, so ist Gott mit ihm, und sie gelingt. Er war sichtbar mit Christus und seinen ersten Anhängern, denn die Erscheinung der neuen Lehre der Liebe war den Völkern ein Bedürfnis; er war ebenso sichtbar mit Luther, denn die Reinigung jener durch Pfaffentum verunstalteten Lehre war es nicht weniger." Darum die Zuversicht: „Mag die geistige Kultur nur immer fortschreiten, die Naturwissenschaft in immer breitere Ausdehnung und Tiefe wachsen und der menschliche Geist sich erweitern, wie er will, über die Hoheit und sittliche Kultur des Christentums, wie es in den Evangelien schimmert, wird er nicht hinauskommen." (Ein wahrhaft prophetisches Wort! Auch in unserm Jahrhundert der Naturwissenschaft und Technik hat es noch seine volle Bedeutung.) Daher zollt er der **reformatorischen Energie der christlichen Religion** volle Anerkennung. „Der christlichen Religion gebührt das größte Lob, da sie ihren reinen göttlichen Ursprung immerfort dadurch betätigt, daß nach den größten Verirrungen, in welche sie der dunkle Mensch hineinzog, ehe man

es sich versieht, sie sich in ihrer ersten Lieblichkeit als Mission, als Hausgenossin und Bruderschaft zur Erquickung des menschlichen Bedürfnisses immer wieder hervortut."

Als einen Christen bekannte er sich selbst offen denen gegenüber, die ihn einen Heiden nannten (mit Eckermann, 4. Februar 1829); wie er aber den Gegensatz zwischen Heiden und Christen faßte, bezeugt sein Wort: „Christen gibt es unter den Heiden, die Stoiker; Heiden unter den Christen — die Lebemenschen." (Aphorismen.)

Der **Bibel** zollte er vollste Hochschätzung. „Deshalb ist die Bibel ein ewig wirksames Buch, weil, solange die Welt steht, niemand auftreten und sagen wird: ‚Ich begreife es im Ganzen und verstehe es im Einzelnen.' Wir aber sagen bescheiden: im Ganzen ist es ehrwürdig und im Einzelnen anwendbar." (Sprüche, Nr. 294.) „Jene große Verehrung, welche der Bibel von vielen Völkern und Geschlechtern der Erde gewidmet wird, verdankt sie ihrem innern Wert." — „Ich bin überzeugt, daß die Bibel immer schöner wird, je mehr man sie versteht; d. h. je mehr man einsieht und anschaut, daß jedes Wort, das wir allgemein auffassen und im besonderen auf uns anwenden, nach gewissen Umständen, nach Orts- und Zeitverhältnissen einen eignen, besonderen, unmittelbar individuellen Bezug gehabt hat." (Sprüche, Nr. 467.)

In diesen und vielen andern Aeußerungen drückt Goethe seine Hochschätzung der Bibel aus. Aber **jede kritische Betrachtungsweise,** jede Scheidung des Echten und Unechten, Geschehenen oder Erdichteten lehnte er entschieden ab, da dadurch nur an dem Wert der Bibel gerüttelt wird. „Wenn die vernichtende Kritik irgend schädlich ist, so ist sie es in Religionssachen; denn hiebei beruht alles auf dem Glauben, zu welchem man nicht mehr zurückkehren kann, wenn man ihn einmal verloren hat." (Mit Eckermann, 1. Februar 1827.) Echt und unecht, meinte er, seien bei Dingen der Bibel wunderliche Fragen. Es komme nicht darauf an, ob das Ueberlieferte Geschehenem durchaus entspreche, sondern darauf, daß es heute unsrer höchsten Entwicklung diene. In diesem Sinn nannte er vor allem **die Evangelien durchaus echt;** denn in ihnen schimmere und leuchte die sittliche Kultur des Christentums; in ihnen sei der Abglanz einer Hoheit göttlichster Art wirksam, welcher von der Person Christi ausging. (Mit Eckermann, 11. März 1832, elf Tage vor seinem Tod.)

Der Kirche, wenigstens in ihrer Aeußerlichkeit, ist er immer fremd geblieben. Aber sie ist ihm eine wohltätige Vermittlerin, „damit allen geholfen werde und damit vielen wohl werde." (Mit Eckermann a. a. O.) Die Kirche werde als ein notwendiges, wenn auch in ewiger Umwandlung begriffenes Institut dauern, „so lange

schwache menschliche Wesen sein werden." Sein Zorn richtet sich aber gegen jedes hierarchische Wesen, gegen Priester, die den Menschen durch unerreichbare Forderungen verwirren, gegen die Pracht und den Reichtum, der in der römischen Kirche sich breit mache. „Was sollte auch ein armes christliches Gemeindeglied von der fürstlichen Pracht eines reich dotierten Bischofs denken, wenn es dagegen in den Evangelien die Armut und Dürftigkeit Christi sieht, der mit seinen Jüngern zu Fuß ging, während der fürstliche Bischof in einer von sechs Pferden gezogenen Karosse einherbraust." (Mit Eckermann, 11. März 1832.)

Hier muß ich leider abbrechen. Noch sehr viel wäre zu besprechen, um Goethe in seinem Verhältnis zum Christentum gebührend zu schildern. Es war mein Bestreben, besonders im zweiten Teil, Goethe selber reden zu lassen. Um den Dichterfürsten recht zu beurteilen, darf man nicht übersehen, daß gerade im beständigen Fortschreiten, in beständiger Bearbeitung neuer Eindrücke und Erfahrungen, in beständig neuer Gestaltung der Ergebnisse sich die Größe seines Geistes bewährte.

Professor Karl Barth und die evangelische Kirche.

Von K. Barkau.

An ihren Früchten sollt ihr sie erkennen. Diese Anweisung Christi hat auch jetzt noch Gültigkeit. Sie gilt auch gegenüber Professor Barth und seiner Theologie. Welche Früchte diese Theologie auf dem weiten Gebiet der evangelischen Kirche und ihrer theologischen Wissenschaft bringen wird, das läßt sich jetzt noch nicht erkennen; aber wohlberechtigt ist die Frage nach ihren Früchten in dem engeren Kreise, in dem sie entstanden ist, nämlich in der evangelischen Landeskirche. Eine Antwort auf diese Frage geben die drei Vorträge, in denen nachfolgend die Rede sein soll.

1.

Den ersten Vortrag hat Professor Barth am 31. Januar 1931 in Berlin gehalten und ihn im folgenden Monat in Bremen und Hamburg wiederholt. Er gibt ihm die Ueberschrift: „Die Not der evangelischen Kirche." Er führt darin aus, daß die Not der evangelischen Kirche eine doppelte sei. Die eine liege im Wesen der Kirche und enthalte zugleich ihre Herrlichkeit. Es sei Pflicht, diese Not zu bejahen und mitzufragen, sonst aber nichts, alles Weitere sei vom Uebel. Die andre Not sei die Not ihrer heutigen Existenz. Dieser Not gegenüber sei Protest am Platz. Beide Arten von Not hängen unter sich zusammen; wenn die erste verleugnet wird, tritt die zweite ein.

Es folgt dann eine Schilderung der gegenwärtigen kirchlichen Wesensnot. Sie besteht darin, daß die evangelische Kirche die Kirche unter dem Kreuz ist. Sie ist nicht durch menschlichen Willensschluß gegründet worden, sondern sie war nach Gottes Ratschluß da, als die Reformatoren von der Kirche ausgeschlossen, sich mit dem Heiligtum der Kirche, dem gekreuzigten Christus, außerhalb der Kirche befanden. Als Kirche unter dem Kreuz ist sie seitdem als Kirche in Not in die Erscheinung getreten. Als solche weiß sie, daß es allein der Entscheidung Gottes anheim gegeben ist, ob sie die wirkliche Kirche ist. Sie muß verharren bei dem erniedrigten Christus; sie kann nur Gott dienen, sie hat keine menschlichen Ziele. Sie kann aber auch Gott nur dienen wollen, sie muß alles Tun schließlich ihm überlassen. Sie darf auch das Ziel ihrer sichtbaren Einheit niemals gefunden zu haben meinen, sie darf nur Zeichen aufrichten auf dem Weg zu diesem Ziel. Solche Zeichen sind ihre Verkündigung, ihre äußere und innere Mission, ihr Sakrament. Das durch diese Zeichen Bezeichnete, Jesus Christus, steht nicht zu ihrer Verfügung. Solange sich die Kirche diese Beschränkung gefallen läßt und nun gerade mit letztem Ernst des Gehorsams und

des Glaubens sich bemüht, ihre Zeichen zu geben, wird sie die eine sichtbare Kirche sein.

Was die Kirche anzubieten hat, ist die in Christus erfüllte Zusage Gottes. Davon muß sie zeugen. Das Zugesagte selbst, den Frieden Gottes, die Erlösung aus der Not des Streites, dieses Zugesagte hat die evangelische Kirche nicht. Sie hat ferner die heilige Schrift als Zeugnis von dem gekreuzigten Christus. Nur dies Zeugnis hat sie anzubieten. Seine Kraft und Wirkung sind ihr nicht offenbar. Was der Kirche fehlt, ist das greifbar lösende Wort, die erfüllende Wirklichkeit der Verheißung. Es fehlt ihr die Synthese. Und das ist ihre Not.

Nach dem Gesagten mußte die evangelische Kirche existieren als eine menschliche Gesellschaft, deren besondre Tätigkeit darin bestände, der Konfrontierung des Menschen mit dem gekreuzigten Christus stand zu halten und nichts sein zu wollen als ein Zeugnis für diese Situation.

Wenn die evangelische Kirche so existiert, hat es keine Not um ihre Existenz, weil ihr Existieren eine Anerkennung ihres Wesens ist. Die Not ihrer Existens tritt da ein, wo man nicht dieser Wesensnot entsprechend existieren will. Das kann in zweierlei Weise geschehen. Auf der einen Seite handelt es sich um die Flucht vor der Sichtbarkeit der Kirche. Sie kann nicht Zeichen und Zeugnis geben, wenn sie nicht sichtbar und in der mannigfachsten Weise bestimmt ist. Diese ihre Bestimmtheit ist eine menschliche, welche die Kirche böse und häßlich erscheinen läßt. Darum ist die sichtbare Kirche vielen ein Aergernis. Man möchte sie am liebsten einschlafen lassen und eine unsichtbare Kirche ohne alle störenden Menschlichkeiten und ohne konkrete Zumutungen an ihre Stelle setzen. Man sieht sie an als ein notwendiges Uebel, und damit geschieht es schließlich, daß man zu ihrem Wesen faktisch nein sagt. Auf der andern Seite handelt es sich um die Flucht in die Sichtbarkeit. Die Reaktion gegen den vorhin geschilderten Idealismus ist in siegreichem Fortschreiten begriffen. Wir sind heute im Begriff, hemmungslos mit einem neu entstandenen Realismus zu segeln, der eine noch größere Not mit sich führt. Seine Entstehung verdankt er den Erschütterungen der Kriegszeit und der Nachkriegszeit, die das Dasein der evangelischen Kirche zum Problem machte und Sehnsucht nach einer aktiven religiösen Leitung hervorrief. Der Protestantismus wird Kirche d. h. sichtbare Kirche sein, oder er wird nicht mehr sein, so lautete die neue Losung. Wenn diese Wendung zur Sichtbarkeit verbunden wäre mit einer schlichten Rückkehr zum Kreuz Christi, mit einem ernsten Erfassen der kirchlichen Aufgabe, dann könnte sie der Kirche zum Segen gereichen. Aber ein Blick auf das, was gegenwärtig darin geredet, geschrieben und getan wird,

zeigt, daß von einer solchen Rückkehr nichts zu merken ist, und daß die Kirche sich jetzt in einer noch größeren Not befindet als vorher. Diese Behauptung sucht Barth durch die folgenden Wahrnehmungen zu stützen.

1. Er tadelt es, daß die kirchlichen Redner und Schriftsteller allgemein übliche Schlagwörter gebrauchen, die das Problem der Kirche nicht bezeichnen können.

2. Er fragt, was die Forderung von Charakter für die Kirche zu bedeuten habe.

3. Er bemängelt es, daß die Frage nach dem Wesen der Kirche mit der Behauptung abgetan werde: Die Kirche hat das Evangelium. Und doch sollte die Wahrnehmung, daß diese Behauptung zahllosen Zeitgenossen nicht glaubwürdig erscheint, die Kirche zur Buße treiben oder ihr wenigstens Verlegenheit bereiten. Davon sei aber nichts zu bemerken.

4. Die Kirche suche eigene Macht, wenn sie eine lebendige Potenz zu werden wünsche.

5. Was als Evangelium verkündigt werde, sei weiter nichts, als eine mit etwas Mystik versetzte Moral des gehobenen Mittelstandes.

6. Er tadelt es besonders, daß der Bindestrich zwischen Volkstum und Christentum das eigentliche Kriterium der kirchlichen Orthodoxie geworden sei.

Er schließt mit den Worten: So nicht weiter, weder zur Linken noch zur Rechten.

Es ist bemerkenswert, daß die ersten evangelischen Christen die Not, von der Barth redet, nicht gefühlt haben. Sie wissen zwar viel von der Not in der katholischen Kirche, aber in ihrer evangelischen Kirche herrscht eitle Freude und Friede. Das kommt daher, daß sie Mittel gegen diese Not kannten, von denen die Barthsche Theologie nichts weiß. Sie glaubten an einen immanenten Gott, der die Liebe ist, und an einen in der Kirche gegenwärtigen Christus. Sie hatten als Gnadenmittel das Wort Gottes und das heilige Sakrament. Nach Barth dagegen steht Gott in unerreichbarer Ferne der Kirche als Richter gegenüber, die Heilige Schrift enthält nur von obenher das Zeugnis von dem gekreuzigten Christus, der Weg von unten nach oben ist nicht gangbar, das Sakrament ist nur ein Zeichen, eine Gnadenwirkung ist nicht faßbar. Christus steht auf der göttlichen Seite und ist darum auch unerreichbar. Was der Theologie Barths sonst noch fehlt, zeigt der folgende Vortrag. Sie ist, wie schon O. F. Münsterman in der Novembernummer 1930 bemerkt, zu individualistisch und hat kein Verständnis für soziales Christentum.

Acht Tage nach diesem Vortrag hielt an derselben Stelle D. Dr. Otto Dibelius, Generalsuperintendent der Kurmark, einen Gegenvortrag: Die Verantwortung der Kirche, dessen Inhalt kurz folgender ist.

2.

Trotz der herben Kritik Barths an der evangelischen Landeskirche hat Dibelius, der zu ihren höchsten Führern gehört, doch anerkennende Worte für ihn. Er nennt ihn einen Mann, dessen Bedeutung für die notwendige Selbstbesinnung der evangelischen Kirche er sehr ernst zu würdigen wisse. Er greift auch seine Theologie nicht an, ja er fühlt bei Barths Vortrag mit die Wesensnot, die Barth der evangelischen Kirche zuschreibt, aber dann schweifen seine Gedanken ab zu den traurigen Verhältnissen in der evangelischen Kirche der Gegenwart. Er denkt an die Eltern, die für ihre Kinder keine christliche Erziehung erhalten können, an die Kranken, die das Wort vom Kreuz entbehren müssen. Er sieht sein Volk überflutet von einer Propaganda der Hemmungslosigkeit in allen Dingen. Er sieht das Leben des Volkes rationalisiert und entsittlicht. Er sieht die Feinde Christi organisiert zu einem großen Heere; er sieht im Osten das Zerstörungswerk dieses Heeres. Er sieht, wie in den Gemeinden sich Männer und Frauen zusammenschließen zu gemeinsamem Kampf gegen die finstern Mächte mit dem Ruf: Die evangelische Kirche muß anerkennen, daß nicht bloß der Glaube, sondern auch die Liebe ihr zugehört. Dann ist er wieder bei dem theologischen Vortrag und wartet auf das Bekenntnis zu diesem Werk der Liebe, jedoch vergeblich. Von Liebe ist nicht die Rede, nur Bedenken und Kritik gegenüber aller Arbeit der Kirche. Mit dem Gekreuzigten konfrontieren, das Wort verkündigen, Zeichen aufrichten, weiter nichts. Alles andre ist Auflehnung gegen Gott, der im Gericht des Kreuzes redet. Soll es nun in der Kirche zwei verschiedene Welten geben? Dort eine Theologie, deren Ernst unbestreitbar ist, die aber das Werk der Liebe lähmt und die evangelische Kirche zum Gegenstand der Problematik macht; hier eine Kirche, die mit einer solchen Theologie nichts anzufangen weiß? Das kann nicht sein. Wenn der Kontakt zwischen beiden fehlt, muß eine Fehlerquelle da sein. Wo ist diese zu suchen? Barth gibt unzweifelhaft Luthers Kirchenbegriff richtig wieder. Die Kirche ist da, wo Wort und Sakrament sind. Ihre Aufgabe ist das Wort zu verkündigen, weltliche Geschäfte sind ihr nicht befohlen. Zu diesem Kirchenbegriff gehört jedoch als Komplement die Lehre von der weltlichen Obrigkeit. Sie soll tun, was der Kirche nicht befohlen ist. Diese christliche Obrigkeit ist heute nicht mehr da, deshalb muß die Kirche aus christlicher Liebe tun, was ihr eigentlich nicht zusteht. Diese Lösung genügt Dibelius

nicht. Er geht deshalb zurück auf das Neue Testament. Dort tritt die Ekklesia zunächst nicht auf als ein Glaubensbegriff, sondern als bestimmter Tatbestand. Ehe ein Wort davon gesagt wird, was die Kirche ist, wird gesagt, was die Kirche tut, nämlich Dienste der Barmherzigkeit. Daraus folgt, daß auch die Kirche der Gegenwart nicht anders leben kann, als daß sie tätig ist in der Liebe. Demgemäß ist ihre Aufgabe eine dreifache. Sie muß das Evangelium verkündigen und sie muß Seelsorge üben, damit das Wort in den Herzen Gestalt gewinne, sie muß Taten der Barmherzigkeit vollbringen oder, um alles kurz zusammenzufassen, sie muß soziales Christentum im weitesten Umfang beweisen. Wir müssen Gott dankbar sein, daß er uns diese Kirche gegeben hat, und der Dank für dies Geschenk ist es, der uns aufs neue den Ruf erheben läßt: „Ekklesiam habemus."

Da Barths Vortrag später gedruckt wurde als der von Dibelius, konnte Barth sogleich eine Erwiederung auf den Vortrag von Dibelius bringen, die er als Nachwort bezeichnet. Er behauptet darin, Dibelius habe ein Votum gegen das seinige gestellt, dessen entscheidende Eigenschaft darin bestehe, zu jenem keine Beziehung zu haben. Der Hauptteil von Dibelius Vortrag ziehe an seinem Vortrag vorbei, wie der Zug des wilden Jägers vor einem einsamen Wegweiser. Dasselbe sei der Fall mit den Antworten, die Dibelius auf seine sechs Fragen gebe. Barth benutzt zugleich die Gelegenheit, seiner Unzufriedenheit mit der Landeskirche noch stärkeren Ausdruck zu verleihen. Er schreibt: „Merkt er (Dibelius) denn gar nicht, daß es Menschen gibt, die sich der Verzweiflung an der deutschen evangelischen Kirche zu erwehren haben, weil sie das Wort von Christus fast nicht mehr, weil sie fast nur noch fremdes, feindseliges Heidenwort in ihr hören können. Warum? Wegen des Brodems von greulicher Selbstzufriedenheit und Selbstsicherheit, der uns aus ihrer Predigt auf der ganzen Linie wie ein Giftgas entgegenschlägt." Er schließt mit den Worten: „Sie haben recht, wenn Sie sagen: ‚Ekklesiam habemus.' Eben darum kann ich mich gegen die Herrschaft Ihres Geistes nur auflehnen."

3.

An den Ausruf „Ekklesiam habemus" knüpft der Generalsuperintendent D. Dr. Martin Schian in Berlin an, indem er einen Vortrag, den er am 10. Juni 1931 in Breslau vor einer theologischen Studenten-Verbindung gehalten hat, und dem er die Ueberschrift gibt: „Ein Beitrag zur Auseinandersetzung zwischen Karl Barth und Otto Dibelius" mit denselben Worten beginnt. Er meint, sie seien ein wohlberechtigter Ausdruck der Freude über die Verselbständigung der evangelischen Kirche. Trotzdem seien ihr

viele Gegner entstanden sowohl aus dem Kreise der Freunde der Trennung von Kirche und Staat als auch aus dem Lager des kirchlichen Liberalismus. Schließlich sei als besonders scharfer Gegner Karl Barth in die Reihe der Kritiker dieser Losung getreten: Er beschäftige sich mit der sichtbaren Kirche fast immer polemisch, so in seinem Römerbrief-Kommentar, so schließlich in seinem Vortrag über die Not der evangelischen Kirche. Er betont darin ihre Menschlichkeit so stark, daß er nicht bloß sich, sondern auch andern die Freude an dieser Kirche unmöglich macht. Es besteht dabei sicher die Gefahr, daß viele, die auf ihn hören, sich gegen die sichtbare Kirche wenden. Wie können die Pfarrer mit Freudigkeit in der Kirche arbeiten, wenn sie immer wieder auf ihre Anfechtbarkeit hingewiesen werden. Das soll uns aber nicht die Freude nehmen an dem gutgestalteten Werkzeug der sichtbaren Kirche, das uns hilft den Willen Gottes auszuführen.

Die Kirche ist aber mehr als ein Werkzeug, sie ist vielmehr selber tätig. Sie ist die Verkünderin des Wortes und die Gemeinschaft tätiger Liebe. Ueber diese ihre Aufgabe ist nun ganz besonders Streit entstanden, und es scheint, als ob sich die Zahl derer mehrt, die der Kirche die Pflicht fürsorglicher Liebe absprechen wollen. Dibelius hatte aus Barths Vortrag herausgehört, daß auch Barth zu diesen zähle. Es war zu hoffen, daß Barth sich dazu äußern und seine Stellung zu dieser Frage klären werde. Das ist aber nicht geschehen. In seinem Nachwort läßt er den Streitpunkt ungeklärt, ob die Kirche die Pflicht fürsorglicher Liebe habe oder nicht habe. Deshalb steht jetzt nur fest, daß Barth die sichtbare Kirche für nötig hält, und daß er sie wegen ihrer Unvollkommenheit in unschöner Weise verurteilt, ja sie durch Aeußerungen wie „der Pastor und das Konsistorium in ihrer Sünden offenkundiger Maienblüte" dem Spott ihrer Verächter preisgibt.

Wie ist das möglich? fragt Schian und gibt zur Beantwortung dieser Frage folgende Gründe an. Barth habe von seinem Standpunkt aus nur das Problem des Wortes im Auge, alles Andere interessiere ihn nicht. Fragen der kirchlichen Arbeit hätten ihm wohl sein Leben lang fern gelegen und die, mit denen man sich in Deutschland beschäftigt, sei er als geborener Schweizer nicht gewohnt. Aus seinen Schriften gehe hervor, daß er sich nicht bemüht habe, sich eine eingehende Kenntnis des deutschen Kirchenwesens zu erwerben oder die kirchliche Arbeit von innen heraus zu begreifen. Vielleicht sei ihm die deutsche Art von vornherein unsympathisch gewesen. Daß er sich mit der praktisch-theologischen Literatur in Deutschland nicht beschäftigt habe, gehe aus seinen heftigen Angriffen in seinem Römerbrief-Kommentar hervor. Man ersehe daraus sofort, daß er ein ganzes Kirchenwesen in Grund und Boden ver-

damme, das ihm kaum recht bekannt sei. Die Art, wie er kirchliche Arbeit kritisiere, entspreche nicht den Maßstäben christlicher Sittlichkeit, ja nicht einmal dem Maßstab sachlicher Gerechtigkeit.

Aus den drei Vorträgen geht hervor, daß der einzige Nutzen, den die Theologie Barths bisher der evangelischen Kirche seines Landes gebracht hat, darin besteht, daß sie zur Selbstbesinnung der Kirche beigetragen hat, wie D. Dibelius lobend bemerkt. Ob sie ihr bald weitere gute Früchte liefern wird, erscheint sehr zweifelhaft.

Die Theologie Barths wird als eine neue Theorie auf dem Gebiet der theologischen Wissenschaft Bedeutung behalten; aber ebenso sicher ist es, daß sie praktisch angewandt auf die kirchlichen Verhältnisse bis jetzt völlig versagt hat und auch wohl immer versagen wird. Hier in Amerika wird sie wohl kaum jemals viele Freunde gewinnen.

EDITORIALS

KARL BARTH

It is hard for us to do justice to Barth for there is no man in contemporaneous theology whose writings we enjoy less. When we read his "Roemerbrief" we felt, of course, that here was an entirely new voice, speaking with an earnestness and an explosive vehemence you don't expect in a commentator. But then it wasn't a commentary on Romans; it was a mere pretense to call it that. Let me only mention the fact that when he takes up the practical part of Paul's letter, beginning with the 12th chapter, he entitles it: "Die grosse Stoerung." Now who in the world when coming to Paul's beautiful and moving exhortations, would think of "die grosse Stoerung," whatever Barth may mean by that. And then his "dialectic" method, this eternal see-sawing between this side and the yon side, the possible and the impossible, between time and eternity! And his style! (Zerbe points out a sentence of nearly three hundred words.) Well, the commentary was a success; the Germans listened as they hadn't listened since Ritschl's time; they were sure a new and luminous star had risen in the sky. And that was only the beginning. In less than twelve years he has built up a new theological school. There are five or six "Barthians" (look it up in the "Keryx" of Jan., 1932, by W. Petersmann). What does he care whether people in America—who have never produced a theological system anyway—appreciate him or not.

Nevertheless, the writer is perfectly willing—and moderately able—to give Barth credit where credit is due. Barth's God is a real God. He is not a democratic God. Some of us remember that even as good a man as W. Rauschenbusch demanded in his "Theology for the Social Gospel" that kind of a God. He said "the worst that could happen to God would be a failure to adjust him to the democratic tendencies of the times." (!) E. G. Humrighausen (a Reformed minister of Indianapolis) has a fine article on this feature in the "Christian Century" (Jan. 27, 1932, p. 114, ff.). He reminds us of Jonathan Edwards' sermon on "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." He said "God in those days spoke through sermons like that. He had authority then. He possessed an objectivity that was real to preacher and worshiper." "Today," he goes on to say, "that title, if reversed, would describe our temper better, "God in the Hands of men"! Yes we are not sure whether there is a God or not, and what kind of a God. We are afraid our

ideas of God might be only projections from the familiar sphere of our homes into the transcendental when we speak of him as a father, or even if we personalize him (see the discussion going on in the "Christian Century" between Wieman and others). Humrighausen relates an incident concerning a sermon preached, at Zurich, by Thurneysen, a Barthian. One who heard it said: "One cannot evade the impression that the man is quite impersonal. He speaks as though he was the instrument of another." God came through. Such sermons are sacraments, says Humrighausen. The preacher was mastered by God.

So the objective reality of God is emphasized throughout. The idea of the divine immanence, so popular in this country, is rejected. But the subjective side of religion receives an altogether unsatisfactory treatment. According to Barth there can be no revelation of God to man, for man is in time, God is in eternity. God has indeed revealed himself in time, but this revelation is at the same time the strongest conceivable veiling of God. The bible is the fallible word of man and also the infallible word of God. Barth, on account of the qualitative difference of time and eternity, cannot move two steps without provoking us with a paradox, without following up one statement with a contradictory one. Barth has a perfect contempt for those who claim to have a knowledge of the divine by experience. From Schleiermacher on to the Methodists and Pietists of different lands, they are all living in a fool's paradise when they speak of their religious experiences. "Rather with the church in hell than with pietists of lower or higher rank in a heaven that does not exist," he says. By the way, the church (in Germany) Barth condemns in unmeasured terms; Brunner, his friend, calls it "the synagogue of Satan."

So we could go on, indefinitely almost, if we wanted to quote all the derailments of this modern John the Baptist. But it is manifestly impossible to do this within the confines of an Editorial. So in closing we will have reference only to one other feature of Barth's system, on which Prof. Petersmann recently gave us an informing and well written article (see March number of Theol. Mag.). We mean his "recovery" of eschatology. Barth is entirely opposed to the optimism of the evolutionists, the Christian evolutionists, who believe in the progress of the race; the men of the social gospel who admonish us to build the kingdom of God; who are engaged in the task of making the "ideals" of Jesus victorious in human life and society. All these efforts are futile, only God can bring in his Kingdom and he'll do it at the end of this present aeon. Then will his whole creation be renewed, sin, conflict and death will be done away and God will dwell with resurrected and glorified humanity.

Eschatalogy, with us almost a forgotten issue, was the real core of the biblical and apostolical message. (Barth). Three hundred times the visible return of Jesus is predicted in the New Testament. To believe meant to hope for the Kingdom of God. "A Christianity that is not altogether eschatology has nothing in common with Christ." (Barth) "The last things are not the closing chapter of the Christian faith. Es geht um nichs anders als die letzten Dinge." (Brunner). This time of the consummation is near, explains Petersmann, because it is already in existence in the eternal world, ready to be revealed in the last time. In all times of religious awakening the same faith has manifested itself.

True, but since the end never came one would think men had learned to revise their opinions.

The problem concerning Barth and Barthianism is an interesting study. If Barth was as unpalatable to others as he is to us, it would be hard to explain the furor he has made. So the fault must partly lie in us, but then Barth has to bear his share.

CHRISTIAN AND JEW

We have repeatedly in the past made reference to the "Community Religious Hour" we have here in Cleveland, an hour on Sunday afternoon when audiences of Catholics, Jews and Protestants listen to religious addresses given by outstanding leaders of these faiths, in turn. A Presbyterian minister who got out of touch with his congregation conceived the idea and is now director of the hour, and the public supports it and him quite readily. The purpose is said to be the establishment of better understanding among the religious people of the community and the resulting greater willingness to cooperate in efforts for social welfare. It is true that in going to these meetings one comes to know the religious viewpoint of Jew and Catholic better, but it is not true that the Protestant feels any closer to Jew or Catholic than he did before. The Catholic speakers are all staunch churchmen, who don't deviate the breadth of an inch from the official path. Besides, there is no room for argument, only questions being asked and answered. The Jewish Rabbis, all of the liberal wing, defend the program and ideals of Judaism with great skill and erudition. Jesus is a great leader, a prophet, a son of Israel, a gift of the Jewish race to the world. But he is not divine. The Jews did not crucify him and the claims of later Christians which idealized and deified Jesus the Jew doesn't accept. He has no use for "religious imperialism." There is no "best," no universal religion, everyone ought to be loyal to his own. The longer one goes to those meetings the more he is strengthened in the impression that

Christian missions have a hard field in Judaism; and he is not surprised that the missionaries tell us that there is more hope along this direction in orthodox Jewry than in the liberal camp; perhaps because there is more real religion with the former and too much intellectual pride with the latter. The Jews seem to like that institution of the Community Hour best of all. In the first place, their own position gets a chance to be ably and impressively stated. The Jewish rabbi of the liberal sort is as a rule superior to the Protestant minister in intellectual equipment and in continuing interest in scholarly pursuits (see the interesting article by Willett in "the Christian Union Quarterly," Jan., 1932, p. 256, pp). Then they send forth the best men they have to those places. Most of them are good orators and when at times there is a Protestant speaker on the same platform and program one feels humiliated by the observation that the Jew is master of the field.

The rabbis like to serve also for the reason that their religion is apt to gain in respectability while receiving an equal share of attention with the Christian. They speak of Jesus in terms of respect and even admiration. What more can the Christian expect? They know that to many liberal Protestants Jesus is no more than an inspiring example, a fine character. They know that the Unitarians are not the only ones that rub elbows with them in fighting trinitarian beliefs (Willett, in the article quoted above, seems to think that churches have given up those beliefs quite generally). For this very reason the writer doesn't feel so at home at these meetings. You hear the same position stated again and again; ably, no doubt, but without greater cogency. There is no room for argument and if there were it wouldn't do any good. No atmosphere or even possibility for a "Christian" prayer. Religiously the Hour does hardly any good; does it do any good in other respects?

It may do some good in the sphere of social causes, such as relief of the unemployed, work for the community "chest," in great calamities, etc., if the presentation of religious differences were confined to the absolutely necessary and a common ground were sought for humanitarian work. Here the Jews can help us indeed. They are well fitted to be allies of the Christians in fighting war and in exposing the evils of the capitalistic system. The Jewish rabbis, as a rule, speak out with more boldness in condemning industrial maladjustment than most ministers. Here, of course, our advocates of the social gospel have not been backward in giving them their due meed of praise.

Finally, every contact of Christian and Jew on a larger scale does some good in helping to remove the prejudice against the Jew and the disadvantages and disabilities he is laboring under in many

countries. Even in America no one seems to like the Jew. The eastern colleges are trying hard to keep down the percentage of Jewish students. They are barred from the fraternities. Doubtless the Jews have some peculiarities that are not pleasant; but think of the sufferings, the persecutions they have experienced at the hands of Christian nations for centuries! Even now the waves of anti-Semitism roll high in our old fatherland. We are not so surprised when we hear of anti-Jewish riots in Poland or Roumania, but how can one explain the anti-Jewish plank in Hitler's platform? In case of his victory they were to be shorn of their citizenship and be put again under ancient restriction! This in the land of Lessing and Mendelssohn? The "Aufklärung" had brought toleration especially to Germany. Lessing had in his "Nathan" given the most enlightened and noble role to the Jew and now, 150 years later, the second largest party of the Reich turns its batteries of hate on the Jew again. How it got on the nerves of the Jews in this country, how they watched developments over there during the election campaign and what a sigh of relief they heaved when Hindenburg swamped Hitler. Yes, moderation got a "reprieve," as Lippmann says, but the end is not yet. It depends on the western nations and their satellites whether moderation will be finally victorious or whether desperation will drive the country to extremes.

And here Catholic, Jew and Protestant can lend a helping hand if they ally themselves with the forces of reconciliation and pacification and compel the militaristic elements to listen to reason. If this is not done, then the future will be dark indeed.

TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

We are compelled to have a little talk with our contributors. The support we get from them, this year, is better than ever before. We receive so many papers that they almost "glut the market." This situation creates a condition which the French describe as an "embarras de richesses," an embarrassment of riches. You get so many you don't know what to do with them. As a result some have to wait month after month before their papers are published and one who has not been an editor doesn't know how the brethren dislike that. They often write us very peevish letters. They tell us that if we don't promise to publish their articles in the next issue to send them back "immediately"; they have "other uses" for them. We, of course, feel very sorry but we can't help it.

The most unhappy feature in the situation is furnished by him who writes a *very long* essay. He has put a lot of work and time

on it; in its type-written form it makes a good appearance and now there is *no room* for it. Brethren, such things hurt us more than you think. Please, remember, articles that have to run through several issues, are, *as a rule*, hard to get space for. There are exceptions and for exceptions, if conditions justify, there may be made a field. But, on the whole don't write more than eight, nine or ten pages (425 words a page) and you'll have a better chance. You'll also save your peace of mind and ours. Thank you.

Yours fraternally,

The Editor.

„Diejenigen, die innerlich viel haben, brauchen äußerlich nicht so viel."

Das Obige ist ein Wort des Altmeisters Goethe. Es ist angebracht, daß wir in diesen Tagen ihn zu Worte kommen lassen, denn wir haben eben erst den hundertsten Jahrestag seines Todes gefeiert. Wir wissen nicht, ob im alten Vaterland dieses denkwürdige Ereignis so begangen worden ist, wie es in normalen Zeiten geschehen sein würde. Gerhard Hauptmann ist in unserm Land auf einer Vortragstour, um den Dichterfürsten den gebildeten Kreisen zu interpretieren. Wir hörten einer seiner Reden zu, die über das Radio kam. Er schilderte das Goethehaus in Weimar, sogar die Vortreppe wurde eingehend beschrieben. Wir hatten das Gefühl, daß er mit dem Dichter einen wahren Kultus trieb, als wenn er ein Halbgott wäre, dessen Verehrung bei seinen Jüngern wohl die Stelle der Religion einnehmen könnte. Bei dem deutschen Volk im allgemeinen wird die Begeisterung nicht so weit gehen. Wenn ein Volk in einem Verzweiflungskampf um seine Existenz begriffen ist, gibt es ihm nur wenig Trost zu wissen, daß es einst einen Goethe sein eigen nannte. Nur der religiöse Glaube hat die wiedergebärende Kraft. Goethe hat schöne Worte über den Glauben geschrieben, aber ein religiöses Vorbild war er nicht.

Auch war er nicht interessiert an nationalen Fragen. Als Napoleon I. bei Jena das alte Preußen vernichtet hatte, gab er Goethe eine Audienz. Die Unterredung brachte zu Tage, daß sich die beiden Männer gegenseitig bewunderten. Goethe rief den preußischen Patrioten, die eine Ueberwindung des Despoten planten, zu: „Er ist euch zu groß, ihr werdet nichts ausrichten." Goethe war Kosmopolit, ihm kam es auf die Menschheit an, der gewöhnliche Patriotismus war ihm eine Beschränktheit. Goethes Weltbürgertum ist viel bewundert worden. Er gehört aller Welt, da er niemand durch nationale Parteilichkeit verletzen kann. Sehr richtig,

aber augenblicklich braucht Deutschland Männer wie Fichte, Schleiermacher und Schiller, die ihrem Volk begeistert zurufen können:

„Ans Vaterland, ans teure, schließ dich an,
Das halte fest mit deinem ganzen Herzen!
Hier sind die starken Wurzeln deiner Kraft . . ."

Es will uns scheinen, als ob es dem Land unsrer Väter an solchen Männern sehr gebricht, denn ein Hitler, Hugenberg und dergleichen können doch kaum ihre Stelle einnehmen.

Doch nun zu dem Wort, das an unsrer Spitze steht. Goethe drückt den richtigen Gedanken aus, daß innerer Reichtum gegen äußeren Besitz mehr oder weniger gleichgültig macht. Wie richtig dies Wort ist auf religiösem, auf christlichem Gebiet! Der Dichter hat allerdings daran wohl weniger gedacht. Er hat Geistesbildung im allgemeinen und Kunstverstand im Auge. Aber den religiösen Menschen erinnert es an den Triumph des Glaubens. Wer die köstliche Perle gefunden hat, gibt alles hin, um sie zu besitzen und schätzt sich glücklich, diesen Preis zu zahlen. Noch mehr. Wer der Liebe Gottes gewiß geworden ist, der weiß, daß alle Stürme und Stöße des Lebens ihn aus dieser Burg nicht vertreiben können. Freilich hier gilt es nicht zu früh zu triumphieren. Es ist ratsam, sich von Rauschenbusch erinnern zu lassen, daß eine solche Seelenstellung nur von ganz großen Glaubenshelden eingenommen werden kann und von denen auch nur zeitweise. Ein Paulus möge sagen können: Wer ein Weib hat, der habe es, als habe er nicht. Ein Luther könne singen:

„Nehmen sie uns den Leib,
Gut, Ehre, Kind und Weib,
Laß fahren nur dahin . . ."

Aber der gewöhnliche Christ könne so hoch nicht fliegen. An diesem Wort ist soviel wahr, daß in gewöhnlichen Zeiten der christliche Heroismus eine seltene Sache ist. Aber es ist auch wahr, daß, wenn die Zeiten heldenhafte Charaktere erfordern, der christliche Glaube sie stets hervorgebracht hat.

Goethes Wort hat auch, abgesehen von der religiösen Sphäre, seine Wahrheit. Wer ein reiches Innenleben führt, wer Interesse an Kunst und Wissenschaft hat, wer sich schriftstellerisch betätigen kann, oder auch seine Kenntnisse nur immer mehr vertieft und erweitert, wird sich über manches Manko in seiner äußeren Stellung hinwegsetzen können. Man kann diese Anschauung zu weit treiben. Die Zyniker der alten Zeit haben gelehrt, daß je weniger Bedürfnisse der Mensch habe, um so glücklicher und zufriedener sei er. Jeder denkt dabei an Diogenes und sein leeres Faß. Alexander bewunderte ihn. Heute bewundert ihn niemand. Heute

wird man an Goethes Wort große Einschränkungen machen. Der Sozialismus hat uns an die überragende Wichtigkeit des ökonomischen Faktors erinnert. Er lehrt uns, die ganze Geschichte der Menschheit von hier aus zu betrachten und zu verstehen. Und diese Anschauung ist das Evangelium der Massen geworden. Dem gegenüber wird die Weisheit des Dichters wohl nur wenig Gehör finden. Der Durchschnittsmensch wird sagen: „Es war leicht für Goethe, so etwas zu sagen. Er führte ein aristokratisches Dasein in Weimar, hatte alles, auch äußerlich, was er begehrte. Wie aber würde er sich bewährt haben, wenn ihn das Schicksal auf die Probe gestellt hätte?!" Nun, es gab damals viele, die in der Armut der Zeit nach des Dichters Wort zufrieden lebten. Auch heute liegt viel Wahrheit in des Dichters Rezept. Jedoch die Welt ist aus dem Leim. Das ökonomische System verlangt gebieterisch eine neue Ordnung. Goethescher Gleichmut und dichterischer Idealismus können nichts tun, um dieses Problem zu lösen.

The Christian World

I Remember the Days of Old*

CHARLES E. JEFFERSON ON PHILLIPS BROOKS

I remember the days of old. Psalm 143: 5.

"I shall never go into Trinity Church again." That is what I said to myself on Thursday, January 26, 1893, just thirty-nine years ago next month. The funeral service was ended. The congregation had finished singing,

For all the saints who from their labors rest,

The eight Harvard students had just carried the casket through yonder door. It was at that moment that I exclaimed, "I shall never go into Trinity Church again!" I said it because I felt I could never look upon another face in this pulpit, and that never could I listen to another voice in this room. For me the glory of the place had departed. Through thirty-eight years I have kept my vow. I am here today solely because your rector invited me to come. I owe such a debt to this church that never shall I be able to refuse anything it asks me to do.

What I say this morning will be intensely personal—almost confidential. I am not going to give a biographic sketch of Phillips Brooks. That is an old story to most of you and the rest of you can get it in the library. I am not going to present an analysis of his sermons. That has already been done by many a homiletic expert. I am not going to exhibit a portrait of his character. That can be done by any of the preachers who come after me. It is not my purpose to estimate his influence or measure the results which flowed from his labors. That can be done by men who never saw his face and never heard the sound of his voice. I want to relate a story which has never been published, and which I alone can tell. I want to tell you what he did for me. You have often heard of what he did for young men in general, let me tell you what he did for one young man in particular. I have no time today for generalities. I desire to be original and intimate. It was Phillips Brooks who made me a minister of the Gospel. I was a law student half-way through my law course, and he took hold of me and turned the stream of my life into a new channel. I have been preaching many years, and all those years have been different from what they would have been had his life never touched my own.

The group of those who knew Phillips Brooks is rapidly dwindling. In a few years the survivors will all be gone. Because I am an eyewitness, I want to put in my testimony before it is too late. That which I have heard, that which I have seen with my own eyes, that which I beheld, that which my hands handled, that which I have seen

* A sermon preached in Trinity Church, Boston, Sunday, December 13, 1931, by the honorary minister of the Broadway Tabernacle, New York City.

and heard, declare I unto you, that you may have fellowship with me in my knowledge of this man of God.

It was on Saturday evening, October 4, 1884, forty-seven years ago, that I saw and heard Phillips Brooks for the first time. He was then a man of forty-nine. I was a stranger in Boston, from the Middle West, having arrived here only a few days before. I knew only two men in all New England, one of whom was Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus, at that time pastor of the Congregational church in Newtonville. Saturday afternoon I chanced to meet Dr. Gunsaulus on Tremont Street and we took a stroll through the Common and the Public Gardens. He was my Coleridge and I was his Charles Lamb. He had a habit of stopping anywhere we might happen to be and delivering an oration to me. Whenever a new idea struck him he would stop walking and begin to orate. When we came in sight of Trinity Church, he promptly halted and proceeded to deliver a eulogy on Phillips Brooks. I had never heard of Phillips Brooks. I had heard Beecher and Talmadge and Joseph Cook, for these three had visited my college town as lecturers. I had heard of Edward Everett Hale and James Freeman Clarke, for their books had carried their fame through the West. But Phillips Brooks was to me unknown. Gunsaulus informed me he was the greatest preacher in America. I felt very ignorant and ashamed. Of course I must now hear him. I heard him that very evening. Why he was preaching on Saturday night I do not remember nor do I know where he preached. The notes in my diary are provokingly brief. His text was, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." The sermon does not seem to have made much impression on me, but the man did. This is what I wrote down before I went to bed: "I have heard Phillips Brooks. Grandest looking man I have ever seen. Large eyes and large mouth. Fine head which he threw back constantly." Strange to say, I added this bit of information: "There were only twenty men present." I knew because I counted them. The fact that the greatest preacher in America could get only twenty men to listen to him on that particular Saturday evening evidently startled me. I went on to quote a remark of Oliver Wendell Holmes to the effect that the best part of our education is flowing in through the women. More women than men heard Brooks that evening.

The next afternoon I was in Trinity listening to a sermon on the text: "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee." This is what I wrote in my diary: "The sermon was twenty-eight minutes long, very simple and not unusually eloquent. House not filled." But while he was not eloquent to me that day, I discovered later on that he had written a sermon on my mind which never faded. That is eloquence, and I did not know it. He made that sentence glorious to me forever. He etched it in fire on my soul.

The next Sunday at four o'clock, I was back in Trinity again, this time to hear a sermon on "Some men's sins are open beforehand going before to judgment, and some men they follow after." In my diary I made no comment on this sermon, but I filled over a page with its contents, and I found out later on that it haunted me and it haunts

me still. The next Sunday at four I was back in Trinity again. The preacher preached on "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." This time I gave two full pages of my diary to a *resume* of the sermon, and this is what I said: "The grandest sermon I have heard in Boston. Not read, and full of fire. Earnest and full of entreaty to come to Christ." You observe that the preacher was growing on me all the time.

Boston at that time was rich in famous preachers. James Freeman Clarke, Edward Everett Hale, Charles A. Bartol, Brooke Hereford, Benard Carpenter, Minot J. Savage, John L. Withrow and Joseph T. Duryea were preaching every Sunday, and of course I had to hear them all. I was a sermon taster. I soon discovered that Phillips Brooks surpassed them all. He was in a class by himself. He was different, deeper, richer, mightier. He was more piercing, more searching, more vitalizing than all the others. It was my custom to hear three sermons every Sunday, and it was seldom that a Brooks sermon was not one of the three. I looked forward to his sermon all week long. I waited for it more than they that watch for the morning.

The effect of his sermons on me was revolutionary. I had heard quite a few preachers, but had, indeed, never heard one who preached in such fashion. I had never known what real preaching is. I had at last discovered a preacher. I wanted all my friends in the West to hear him. I felt sorry for them because they could not live in Boston. I longed to tell everybody about him. Like the woman of Samaria I wanted to cry out, "O come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did!"

Everything about him seemed to me to be perfect. Physically he was as handsome as a Grecian god. When he stood in the pulpit, I felt that an archangel had descended from the court of heaven to announce to us the will of God. Some people said he spoke too rapidly. It never seemed so to me. He spoke just right. Other preachers were too slow. I could outstrip them in my mind and had to wait for them to catch up. I never had to wait for Brooks. By running as fast as I could, I could keep up with him without losing my mental breath. From the elocutionary standpoint his voice was not ideal. He had no such voice as Henry Ward Beecher or Richard Salter Storrs. It was not musical or rotund, and sometimes it grew husky. But I did not mind that. Even huskiness seemed to be a sort of vocal virtue. I wished more preachers were husky.

More than half the time he read his sermons from manuscript. But that did not offend me. I had always said that a sermon read from manuscript is not a real sermon. Like most people, I did not care for read sermons. But I cared for his. In the mornings, he nearly always read, and in the afternoons he often spoke without notes, and I could see no difference. He was just as free with manuscript as without it and just as full of fire. When I shut my eyes I could not tell whether he was preaching without manuscript or with it. It was always genuine preaching. He burnt his way through his manuscript and set the congregation on fire. He flung himself with magnif-

icent abandon on the people before him, and a sheet of paper could not block his way.

His language was always simple and elegant, felicitous and poetic Every now and then he tossed off a sentence which flashed like a gem. Sometimes he would scatter a whole handful of jewels over us and I went scampering after them, eager to gather them up for my diary. He never seemed to be conscious of what he was doing. He was performing miracles but he did not know it. To say things beautifully was natural to him, and the flowers which he strewed along his sermonic way were not artificial flowers coaxed into bloom by the summer which he carried in his heart. While he was preaching there was a fragrance in the air. Somebody had broken an alabaster box and the perfume filled all the place where we were sitting.

His ideas were abundant and illuminating. He always set me thinking. He stabbed my mind wide awake. The gray matter of my brain became amazingly alive, every cell was functioning. Under the magic of his thought my own thoughts leaped and danced. Scales, as it were, fell from my eyes and I saw things more distinctly than I had ever seen them before. I was swept upward to a higher plane. St. Paul says he was carried once into the third heaven. I do not know where or what the third heaven is, but Brooks could carry me into something closely akin to paradise, and when the sermon ended, whether I was in the body or out of the body I could not tell. When we passed from the vesper service into Copley Square and gazed into a western sky full of the splendor of a dying day, I felt that the glory of heaven was no more wonderful than that of the world in which we had just been living. The sermon and the sunset sky were made of the same sort of stuff, and both had on them authentic and indubitable marks of the Almighty.

It was the preacher's spirit which made the sermons great. Truth came to us through his personality. There was nothing petty about him or mechanical or shallow or false. His mind was like the city which St. John saw, open on all four sides, and the kings of thought brought their riches and glory into it. I felt he had read all the books I had ever read and ten thousand more besides. He took in all the schools, and all the theological circles, and all the creeds, and all the churches, absorbing from every one of them whatever truth it had to proclaim. His heart was big as his mind, big enough to take the whole world in. He saw the world through his heart. While he spoke we were sure we were all included in the circle of his sympathy and love. Nobody ever felt disposed to link him with any particular branch of the Church of Christ. In our heart of hearts we kept saying, "Truly this is a man like unto the Son of God!"

He dealt always in affirmations. He had no time to squander on negations. He had keen eyes for all things lovely and of good report. If there was any virtue or any praise within sight, he laid his mind upon it and we all followed his example. In his presence the peace of God which passes understanding guarded our hearts and thoughts through Christ Jesus. For he never allowed us to lose sight of Christ.

Every sermon was baptized into the Spirit of Christ. No matter what his text, one could always feel certain that before he got done with us we should all be standing before the judgment seat of Christ. He was sure that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Like Paul, he was always saying, "I beseech you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." "Come to Jesus" was one of his favorite exhortations. We expect that appeal in a camp meeting or in an evangelistic campaign or in a Salvation Army meeting, but I did not expect to hear it at the center of Boston culture. I never dreamed of hearing it from the passionate lips of America's greatest preacher. It was fitting that at his funeral we should sing,

Jesus Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.

I ranked Brooks above all the other Boston preachers of my day, because he above all others exalted the revelation of God's heart in Christ.

I had not listened to these sermons many weeks before I began to wish that I too might be a preacher. Now that I had found out what preaching is, I felt sure that preaching is what this world most needs. I wished I could preach. I had never had the wish before. I looked down on preachers. They were an inferior set. I looked down on the church. It was a belated institution. I looked down on orthodox Christianity. It was, I thought, becoming obsolete. My idols were Huxley and Herbert Spencer. I found no inspiration in the pulpit. I found it in Emerson and Carlyle. All my life plans were settled. I knew what I was going to do and be. My college classmates were certain I was foreordained to be a lawyer, probably a statesman. And now to my amazement I began to wish that I could preach. Old things were gradually passing away, all things were presenting themselves in a new light. Interest in my law books was waning. The old-time splendor gradually faded from their pages. The law library on Beacon Hill ceased to be the hub of my universe. In the classroom I found myself often thinking of Trinity Church. In the midst of a lecture I could hear the voice of Brooks above the voice of my professor. The church was irresistibly crowding out the court house. My thoughts hovered round congregations rather than juries. I wanted to be a preacher. I knew I could not be one, for I was a skeptic. I was a bundle of doubts. I believed in God and immortality and that was about all. But I wished I could preach. I had never had a call. I did not believe in calls. But I wished I could preach. I spoke one day to Gunsaulus about it, and he said, "Why not have a talk with Brooks?" I said, "I'm afraid of him." He said, "I will ask him to make an appointment with you at his home." The thing was done. I called on the great preacher. It was Friday morning, the ninth day of January, 1885. St. John says it was about the tenth hour when he and Andrew had their first interview with Jesus. I can be more precise than that. It was at exactly ten o'clock that I entered the rectory door. I had never been so awed in my life. I feared that the servant who ushered me in would hear the beating of my heart. I had only three or

four minutes to drink in the wealth of art treasures around me when the preacher entered the room. I was in a palace, filled with books and pictures and statues and marble busts and carved images, including a huge one of Buddha, but I never noticed the palace after the king came in. He greeted me cordially. I blurted out an apology for coming, telling him it was wicked for me to steal any of his time, but he tossed my apology aside with a story illustrating the point that, no matter how many interruptions may occur, a man always gets through the day somehow. He said all this while standing before the open fire warming himself. When he sat down he said, "Well, how is it with you?" In a few words I told him my story. I unpacked my theological burdens. I unrolled my bundle of doubts. I spread before him the things I did not believe. I expected him to fall off his chair. But he seemed neither shocked nor offended. He evidently had talked with young men before. I wanted light on a dozen puzzling questions. "Have I got to believe the miracles of Jesus?" was one of my major inquiries. His reply was, "You may believe them." That word *may* was a surprise. That swept away the specter of coercion and reduced the fever of my mind at once. We talked of the Old Testament and the stories in Genesis. He said, "Men are always afraid of giving up this or that because of the consequences. The supreme question is," said he, "Is this the truth, let the consequences be what they will." He put the truth first. It had never occurred to me that a minister could do that. I supposed that the Bible had to come first. We spoke a long time about Christ, his person and his physical resurrection. I was disposed to put all the emphasis on the spiritual Christ. He did not agree with me. He believed in the physical Christ as well as in the spiritual Christ. "The man," said he, "who believes in both will get more than the man who believes in only one."

We had talked now just an hour and a half. That is what the clock said, but it seemed incredible. I had been living above the clock. I arose to take my leave. He seemed in no hurry to have me go. He even asked me to come again. At the door he bade me good-by in a tone which was inimitable and unforgettable. I can hear him say it yet. I never called again. I felt it would not be right. I had no further claim upon his strength or time. But after a week of meditation I decided to enter the ministry. The following three seasons I attended his Saturday evening Lenten Bible Class for young men. Each course of lectures ended with a social in his study. At one of these socials I screwed up my courage to ask him a question: "How do you ever find time to do all the work which you are doing?" He was several inches over six feet tall, but at that moment he looked seven feet and over. On looking up I saw his smile floating down upon me and this is what he said, "A man can do a good deal when he gets his growth." After that night I asked him no more questions. From that time on I was a silent listener. Through the three years of my seminary course I heard him preach again and again. He was my seminary. He did more for me than all of my professors combined. He kindled a fire in me. He gave me a vision. He made me a believer

in God, and in man, and in myself. Nothing could induce me to leave Trinity. Through those three years I received communion here. I was not an Episcopalian, but he received me into your family. In spirit I still commune with you whenever the bread is broken in remembrance of him who died for us all.

I ate his sermons and lived on them. They were the bread of life to me. In my middle years in the seminary I was offered what seemed to me at that time a fabulous salary to preach for a village church in New Hampshire. I was asked to do nothing but preach, leaving Boston Saturday night and returning for my seminary studies Monday morning. I turned the invitation down. Listening to Brooks was a means of grace on which I felt my future usefulness depended. In those three years he gave me a vision of Christ which does not grow dim, and kindled in me an enthusiasm for the church which has never died down, and set me an example of preaching which humbles me and baffles me and yet spurs me on. I have now been preaching for forty-four years, just twice as many years as he preached in this church, and through all of my years, his face has been in my eyes and his voice had been in my ears, and to stand in his pulpit on his birthday, to render this tribute of love, I count the most precious of all the privileges and honors which a generous world has showered upon me.

Christian Leader.

Book Review

(When ordering books, please mention this Magazizne.)

NOTE—*Reviews, when not signed, are by the Editor.*

Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, by *Prof. R. C. H. Lenski, D.D.* Lutheran Book Concern, Columbus, Ohio, 1931. 1418 pages, $4.50 net.

It is not often nowadays that we get a new commentary on a book of the Bible. The Religious Book Club recommends a new book every month, but if there has been a single commentary among them it has escaped our notice. The author of this book is dean of the Theological Seminary at Capital University of Columbus, Ohio, an institution of the Ohio Synod (now part of the "American Lutheran Church"). Perhaps the fact that he is a Lutheran accounts for his preference for exegetical studies. The Lutherans have always been great Bible students. They, more than any other church, we believe, still practice expository preaching. They put a laudable emphasis on the "Scriptum est!" and they don't lose themselves so easily in philosophical speculations or psychological and sociological treatises.

But even for a Lutheran Dr. Lenski has a most remarkable record. He has put out a book on the "Eisenach Gospel Selections," one on the "Eisenach Epistle Selections," one on "Old Testament Eisenach Selections" and one on "New Gospel Selections;" each one of these four books numbers over 1000 pages, all together perhaps 6,000 pages. Now he has added to these ponderous volumes the one before us with 1418 pages! Prof. Lenski seems to have an industry, a love for the work, a capacity for sustained application almost unheard of in an American theologian. It reminds us of the times and achievements of Barnes in America, Mat. Henry and Spurgeon in England and other feats of the literary heroes of the past.

The writer gives to the critical questions that a commentary on St. John's gospel is apt to raise, but little space. The author of the gospel according to him is the apostle John. The possibility that such a book could have been written by a "Presbyter" John of the second century, he dismisses, rightly, we think, as an absurdity. If John was the author it would follow that his book would deserve higher rank as a historical source for the construction of a life of Jesus than many scholars will admit. Without a doubt it is difficult to harmonize the Christ of John with the Christ of the Synoptics. In John's gospel the Baptist, already at the very moment of his first sight of Jesus, points to him as the Lamb of God that bears the sin of the world; and again,

in the interview with Nicodemus, there is another reference to his crucifixion (v. 14). The picture of the gradual development of his consciousness of the coming doom which we got in the Synoptics, is more convincing. By admitting this we by no means side in with those who claim that Jesus in his Galilean days took a rosy view of his work in Israel; for already in the Sermon on the Mount he refers to those who should be persecuted for his sake (Mat. 5: 11).

The different tone and character of John's gospel has impressed the church at all times. Clement of Alexandria says that while the other witnesses gave us largely the external facts of Jesus' life, John wrote a more spiritual gospel. And it is not only that he moves on a more exalted level. Jesus' discourses in John have only one subject, they are revelations of the Master's Self. Jesus speaks of himself as the life, the light, the bread of life, the revealer of the Father, the Son of God who is one with the Father. The course of the story as told here shows the human reactions resulting from the Lord's self-revelation. On the part of his enemies, their unbelief culminates in deadly hatred; on the part of his disciples, their faith rises to the full understanding of his mission, ch. 17, 7 pp.

As to the nature of Jesus' discourses in John, the question always arises: If Jesus generally spoke as the synoptics have him speak, could his speeches in John be just as they are recorded there? The writer of this book says, they are just as the Holy Spirit wanted John to reproduce the words of Christ. He refers to the promise that the Holy Spirit would remind the disciples of the things Jesus had told them. He makes the strong statement (overstatement, we think) that none of the sacred writers made a single mistake; that we must hold to the inerrancy of the Bible in substance and expression.

We would say that John, the apostle whom Jesus loved, was able to catch the deeper side of Jesus' nature and revelation, better than any other gospel writer, but that the discourses of the Lord as given by John were not just a "dictation" of the Holy Spirit, but the words of Jesus worked over by a deeply congenial spirit.

However, these critical questions take up only very little room in the book. Dr. Lenski has given us a practical commentary, based on a thorough study of the original. There are plenty of quotations of the Greek text and even of occasional Hebrew words (strange to say, the Hebrew is always correctly printed: a rare thing in an American book!). Still, the book is intended for the regular minister, not for the scholar only. A real, serious study of the text is necessary for the one who wants to preach a biblical sermon. In this commentary the preacher finds exegesis of the most substantial kind, in clear and fluent language. We congratulate the author on the successful completion of his great task and wish him many grateful readers. Let no one be afraid of the size of the book. He need not study the whole of the 1418 pages. Let him refer to whatever text from John he wants to preach on or to have more light about, and Dr. Lenski will put before him a full measure, a plain answer and sound doctrine.

The Story of the Church, by *John Clover Monsma.* Rae D. Henkle, Publisher, New York, 1931. 315 pages.

This is not a church history in the ordinary sense of the word. It is the writer's object to tell the story of the church in a simple direct way from the standpoint of a disinterested "intellectual" rather than from that of a believing Christian. For that reason all the supernatural elements of the Scripture record are omitted although the author himself says that he believes in them whole-heartedly. By this telling only the ordinary facts of history that are received by all, he thinks he can invite the attention of everybody, Jew and Gentile, Roman Catholic and Protestant.

It can be understood at the outset that this plan won't work. Christianity cannot be comprehended on a wholly natural basis; and the hope that a story of the church so written will appeal to Jew, Catholic and Protestant is also futile.

The book naturally begins with the development of Jesus (the author calls him "Joshua" throughout). Jesus had been a profound student of Israel's history; besides he is a deeply spiritual person. By brooding over Israel's tragic past and following the light of the spirit, he arrives at two principles for a philosophy of life: the supremacy of the spiritual over the natural and of the supremacy of spiritual love over physical force. He feels that it is his mission to carry this program to his people and to the world. So he steps out into the arena to throw down the gauntlet to the anti-God of the Ages. Down by the Jordan the great John baptizes him, sensing his greatness by intuition. This baptism means to Jesus his inauguration as the leader and savior of Israel and the world.

We don't think that such an insight and such an enduement with world-leadership could have come to Jesus in the ordinary way of religious development.

The writer now goes on to sketch the short career of Jesus. Not a word about his ministry of healing; just his teaching and personality. The cross is the culmination of his life. Not a word about the resurrection. Pentecost follows, great day in the history of the church. But Peter never says a word about the resurrection!

Follows the chapter on the heroic age of the church. Then its developing organization; its great leaders; its mission work among the barbarians (its Light shining in the Darkness); the first outlines of a Christian civilization. The writer paints a rather favorable picture of the Christian world of that age, somewhat in the style of the "Gesta Christi."

But then the church seeks a way out of Medievalism. The Reformers bring in a new age. The dark sides of the picture are by no means wanting. Still the outlook of the writer is tinged with optimism. Even the Russian church will take on new life, he thinks. "Joshua of Nazareth is Winning out" is the title of the last chapter. There is a lot of valuable information in the book. In a plain, straightforward way the development of nineteen centuries are made to pass before us. At two or three sittings one can get a bird's eye view of a complicated process.

But we fear the author's deliberate attempt to win the foes of supernaturalism over will miscarry. The Jews won't come for they are opposed to one world-religion for all. The Catholics won't admit that the Reformation was the best way out of Medievalism. And if he gets some liberals on his side, he'll lose all the fundamentalists and a good many who are not fundamentalists in the narrow sense.

The Moral Crisis in Christianity, by *Justin Wroe Nixon.* Harper and Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1931. 197 pages.

The title of the book at once reminds us of the famous "Christianity and the Social Crisis" by Walter Rauschenbusch in 1907, and in turning the title page, we notice that it is dedicated "to the memory of W. Rauschenbusch." The author pays beautiful tribute to the great and decisive influence Rauschenbusch's personality and teaching have had upon him. His first contact with Rauschenbusch was when he heard a Hallowe'en sermon by him at Dennison University (a Baptist institution near Newark, Ohio) in which Rauschenbusch presented a new conception of sainthood. It so happened that the present Reviewer heard that same sermon, at Zanesville, Ohio, a day or two previously to its delivery at Granville (where Dennison University is located).

Rauschenbusch claimed in that address that saints were not only those whose names we find in the calendar, but all those who do their daily work conscientiously, following the example of their master. His interpretation was largely in consonance with Luther when the Reformer declared that the maid sweeping the house carefully on Saturday was doing a work just as acceptable to God as the priest or bishop's reading Mass on Sunday.

The writer goes on to say that Rauschenbusch was the most religious person he ever met. To come under the spell of Rauschenbusch was to him to have come in touch with Reality. Rauschenbusch's basic idea was his conviction of the *world-transforming scope* of Christianity. His whole life embodied this idea, and he was perhaps the first to feel that the hour of its realization had come. All that Jesus said and did had to Rauschenbusch for its purpose the social redemption of the life of the race. Rauschenbusch became a Christian Socialist for he believed that Socialism in some form was ultimately needed to give the religion of Jesus a body.

The "Social" Gospel running for a while in full force, has since had its eclipse. The World War and its disappointing results have created a mood of disillusionment. A different reaction to the claims of science has divided the Church for a while into the warring camps of Modernism and Fundamentalism. A long period of prosperity (1922-1929) dulled our sense for the spiritual realities. But an unprecedented depression following this has forced again upon the Church the necessity of finding a solution for the tremendous social problems of the day. If the Church fails the world at this time and in this respect, Communism will reap the rewards, for it accepts the challenge of a refractory world order and undertakes the task to remold it on a gigantic scale.

The world is in an expectant mood, according to the writer. The question is, is our moral code to be determined by tradition or by an intelligent study of what is most expedient? In other words, the course the Church is to take is not charted by the experiences of the past. Its conduct must be to a great extent experimental. Still Christianity can make great contributions to the experiment. It bases all life on the family ideal (fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man) a most pregnant conception and a great task: that of realizing everywhere fraternal relationships. Furthermore, it presents the religious outlook of Christian theism, of a creator-God, interested and operative in his world. Finally it hands down the career and personality of its founder.

The Social Order puts before us a society of conflicting group interests. The habits, insights and ideals of the individual reflect those held by the group. Christianity's task is to create a sense of moral contradiction between the Christian ideals and existing conditions and evils. It must teach individual and class to transcend the selfish group views and interests and see the race as a whole. The strategy of the Church in working on this herculean task should be to ally itself with forces trying to remove the same conditions. It should not be satisfied with the attitude of compromise (seeking a temporary or half-way solution) or of withdrawal (leaving social salvation to the Lord and his second coming), but seek "integration", i.e., build the Kingdom of God into the very structure of society.

The author suggests a number of conditions that will be essential to progress in the church's social program. He hasn't much faith in the moral effectiveness of certain doctrinal beliefs. He would encourage the mood of exploration. He believes that the church's work in the world is creative rather than merely preservative and protective. It should move forward in a series of adjustments to the needs of mankind. The church must be *adaptable*, he emphasizes early and late; otherwise it will become merely a decorative element in society. It will in some form probably be a permanent fact, but only if it becomes flexible, progressive, life-serving. Will the religion of the future be a religion of escape or a religion of world-transformation? Herein lies the moral crisis of Christianity.

Rauschenbusch saw the inevitability of this crisis so clearly and exhorted us to the highway of danger but of exalted hope so fearlessly. Therefore the author closes his book by invoking once more the insight and courage of his hero, Walter Rauschenbusch.

It is an able book and the writer rendered a service to the cause so dear to his revered teacher. At the same time, he has brought the name and fame of Rauschenbusch again to the notice of the religious public of today. We hope, with him, that an adequate biography of Rauschenbusch will soon be undertaken by capable hands. We have often wondered why such a work had not appeared long before this.

In one respect the writer does not walk in the steps of his great teacher. Rauschenbusch's style was one of his strong features, clear, moving in short sentences, full of striking illustrations. The style of

his pupil is rather involved. We counted one sentence of nineteen lines, another of fourteen.

Since Mrs. Eddy, by *Altman K. Swihart*, New York, Henry Holt and Co. 402 pages.

In the September number, 1931, (p. p. 391 ff) we discussed Mr. Dakin's remarkable book on Mrs. Eddy. It was based on unimpeachable sources. Trying to be entirely fair to the striking personality and the wonderful achievements of the founder of Christian Science, it yet pointed out some of the weak points in Mrs. Eddy's spiritual armor, such as her almost complete dependence on Mr. Quimby in regard to mental healing and the fact of her life-long fight with M. A. M. (malicious animal magnetism) a kind of hysteria that caused her such intense suffering. It was no wonder that the Christian Science authorities tried to suppress the book, threatening the publishers (Chas. Scribner's Sons) with boycott.

In that review we mentioned briefly Mrs. Augusta Stetson of New York, one of the most successful and famous of Mrs. Eddy's pupils, who was later excommunicated by her because she became too influential and too dangerous to the supremacy of the founder. The book before us gives us her story in detail. It also tells us about another pupil of Mrs. Eddy, Mrs. Bill, the teacher of the "Church of the Universal Design." But since Mrs. Bill has not impressed herself on the mind of the general public, we shall give only a brief account of the former lady.

Mrs. Stetson was a woman of very strong characteristics. She possessed unbounded vitality and an enthusiasm that was thrilling and contagious alike. She became a most devoted believer in Christian Science and an adoring disciple of Mrs. Eddy. "As God is with me," she said, "so is Mrs. Eddy." Mrs. Eddy was to her the mouth-piece of God, the expression of the motherhood of God. She believed and taught that the second coming of Christ took place in the publication of the Christian Science text-book. Christian Science is the manifestation of Christ in Mrs. Eddy, the female representative of God; for her she claimed oneness with God. In all this she was only accepting what Mrs. Eddy had said of herself, although the latter would at times admonish her not to deify the founder of Christian Science.

Mrs. Stetson became the founder of the first Christian Science church in New York City. She had an especial attraction for the wealthy. Ladies in the finest of clothes and the richest of colors thronged the aisles of her church. She would say, "if Christ told us to admire the beauty of the lilies, why should beauty and color not be acceptable to him in the clothes of his believers?" Rich people contributed fifty thousand and even a hundred thousand dollars to her building fund. Her church was said to be the finest in the country. Prosperity, she would say, usually follows spirituality. Her new home cost one hundred thousand dollars.

In the main, Mrs. Seteson's ideas were borrowed from her great teacher. In some things she took a more extreme stand than Mrs.

Eddy. Even Mrs. Eddy had taught that material generation was false. Mrs. Stetson went so far as to discharge her practitioners when they married. Marriage would ultimately be abolished by Christian Science, she said. Spiritual conception was to supplant sex-generation. A true Christian Science believer would try to practice chastity even in the married estate (no cohabitation). Mrs. Stetson claimed all kinds of cures; broken ankles and legs, cancer, diphtheria, consumption, spinal troubles and other ailments yielded to her treatment. Her husband she couldn't cure, he was "unreceptive."

But her influence and personality began to overshadow that of the founder. Now Mrs. Eddy decided to move against her. It was shown in Mr. Dakin's book how well she guarded against loss of her supremacy. Mrs. Stetson was called before a committee of the Central Board. Malicious Animal Magnetism was charged against her. Errors in teaching, the use of mental reservations and other accusations were raised. She made a strong defense but in vain. Her license was revoked, she was discharged from her pulpit, dismissed from the congregation, excommunicated. A more unjust judicial verdict was seldom delivered, we think, for Mrs. Stetson was one of the most loyal pupils Mrs. Eddy ever had. Even after being so shamefully betrayed by her she stayed faithful to her. Many of her pupils and friends stood by her. For many years she advocated Christian Science principles and practices. She died at an extreme age. Her admirers and believers looked for the final "revelation" of herself and Mrs. Eddy.

It has not yet come; still the cult seems to thrive. With a metaphysics denying the reality of material existence and the inescapable necessity to ignore what can't be ignored, the Christian Scientists go on smiling and happy, letting others alone but apparently sure that they have something better. They don't argue, don't discuss—just believe. Who, in this 20th century of ours, can understand such a mentality?

The author of the book writes with a detached mind; he just records what he gathers from friendly sources. Whether he approves or disapproves, one must find between the lines if at all.

Ventures in Belief —Christian Convictions for a Day of Uncertainty. Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1930, New York. 242 pages.

The ten writers who contribute their thought to this volume attempt to state the major convictions of the Christian mind as they may be held by young men and women alert to every breath of modern thought. R. Niebuhr, who furnishes the introduction, writes on the general theme, the "Christian Faith in the Modern World." The Traditionalist, he says, does not feel the need of a restatement of his faith because he is not sufficiently active, intellectually, to recognize its difficulties. The moral adventurers maintain their faith in spite of recognized difficulties because by intuition they have laid hold upon heroic assumptions that furnish them a dynamic strong enough to enter upon a victorious struggle with the adverse forces of the world. Niebuhr's article is the most substantial in the book, but his language is far from being popular. In this respect he could learn from Bishop McConnell,

who follows him in the book telling us what he believes about God. The main objection to Christian theism, he says, comes from impersonalism. It is contended that personalism would bring human limitations into the deity. McConnell claims that belief in a personal God need not include these limitations. The other objection arises from the presence of evil and pain in the world. The bishop admits it is hard to account for that, but it would be still harder to account for all the good in the world without having recourse to a benevolent intelligence. The best he sees in the world is Christ, and a God as good as Christ would meet all our needs.

H. N. Wieman writes about, What is the World to me? Kirby Page about Society. H. E. Fosdick's subject is the Church. He repeats the claim of the ordinary Modernist that Jesus never intended to found a church or foresaw that a church separate from the synagogue would come into existence. A contention at once unnatural and opposed to the plain records, see Acts 1 and 2; Matt. 28: 18-20. To Fosdick the idea that the church was supernaturally founded, is incredible: what then about Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit? His article pleads for a reconciliation of faith and science, for church union, etc. Rufus M. Jones, the Quaker, writes on Prayer.

The volume is written particularly for students and doubtless light and leading can be found for them on many of its pages.

Borden Parker Bowne, His Life and His Philosophy, by *Francis John McConnell*, one of the Bishops of the M. E. Church. The Abingdon Press, New York, 1929. 291 pages.

Twenty years ago the Reviewer heard a Methodist minister speak in terms of high praise of B. P. Bowne and his philosophy. We had never heard of the man and had an unspoken feeling that perhaps the title of "philosopher" could be ascribed to him only in a very general sense. Since then we have heard more of Bowne, but if we had been asked to tell all we knew of him—before we had read this book—it could all have been done by mentioning the word "Personalism," just that and nothing more. However, now we have gone through Bishop McConnell's book and have come to see that Bowne was a great man and a philosopher of note. McConnell was a student of Bowne at Boston University. Besides, McConnell is a man who among his many good points has the distinction of possessing very considerable philosophical ability and interest. He also has the gift—somewhat rare with philosophers—to write a lucid style. In fact he has never been charged with obscurity, to our knowledge.

McConnell doesn't tell us why he waited nearly nineteen years—Dr. Bowne died in 1910—before he got busy on this biography. But such things sometimes happen. Permit us to refer to a case that we have mentioned more than once. Professor Rauschenbusch, of Rochester, N. Y., passed away in 1917, nearly fifteen years ago, and his biographer has not yet been found.

Young Bowne was very poor, yet very eager to get an education. At one time the seventeen-year-old boy worked as a truck driver in

New York, along the water front. He got his training at New York College. Later he went to Europe to broaden his mind, studying in Paris and in Halle, Germany. The teachers who influenced him most at the latter place were Ulrici and Lotze. Bowne later acknowledged that the results of his thinking were largely Lotzian. In 1876 Bowne became professor of philosophy at Boston University.

Spencer's Philosophy was the system that at that time occupied the minds of most. Spencer left no place for God or design in his evolutionary thought. The "Unknowable" was his designation for what others called God or Universal Mind: his viewpoint was altogether materialistic. Bowne felt repelled by Spencer's whole system. He objected to it not only because he himself was a theist, but for logical reasons. The faith required to accept Spencer's system, he said, was "beyond anything in Israel." Spencer made the Unknowable do the things that others attribute to God. Then Bowne wholly disagreed with Spencer's idea of the Self. The Self was not a permanent, independent agent but only a succession of states of consciousness (sensationalism).

Bowne, later, came to call himself a realistic Idealist. He believed in the material world, but the forces of the universe were to him the expression of ideas. He would again, sometimes call his philosophical position transcendental empiricism. This characterization calls to mind Kant. Kant he considered the one great star in the philosophical sky. Kant's critique of the pure Reason with its refutation of the ordinary proofs of the existence of God, he admired greatly. Also Kant's contention that time and space are only forms of intuition; time is the succession of events, space is the being together of objects. Space, without objects, is empty, is nothing.

He agreed with Kant in teaching that the reason is a constitutive factor in our getting knowledge (Kant's "categories"); and that we only know the thing as it appears to us. Kant's claim, however, of our not knowing the thing in itself, he said, leads—and has led—to skepticism.

Bowne was a confirmed Theist The orderly arrangement of the material world, its universal law, the necessity of final causes were to him evidences of a divine, creative intelligence. The fact alone that the universe was intelligible proved that supreme intelligence was back of it. This belief, he said, was an assumption, but a spontaneous and natural one. Theistic belief is the resultant of our reaction against the universe.

The name that represents most correctly and fully Bowne's last conviction as to the universe and what is back of it, is *Personalism.* He believed in a personal creator and power behind the phenomena. The objection to this view that it would put God under the same limitations we are under he would reject. The infinite does not become finite because it gets into contact with the finite. We generally use the term "super-personality" if we want to escape the criticism made, but Bowne, as far as we can see, doesn't employ it. Bowne knew well the many obstacles to the idea of a loving, almighty God, arising from the evil in the world. He said, looked at from the individual observa-

tion, the world often suggests the dreamings of a blind demiurge (Gnostic term). Taking it, however in long periods and general tendencies it suggests a plan, progress, ends.

To the Pragmatists (James and others) he admitted that emphasis on the practical outcome is justifiable. But to believe whatever suits you, whatever brings "success", he rejected vigorously. The Universe is founded in moral principle and moral principle will have its way in the end. The test of truth is life, but Bowne held to the objectivity of truth. Still, if persons are the ultimate expressions of reality, we must follow the needs of persons in our quest for the real.

The Bishop has chapters on Bowne as a teacher and as a religious guide. Bowne was sometimes attacked by Methodists as too intellectual or too liberal, but without doing him any harm. His personalism is not a view looked on with favor today. Wieman's "feature of the universe which helps us in the integration of our life" or Mather's "personality-producing forces" are more to the taste of a scientific age. But "a deity you can't pray to is only the ghost of a God." The Christian follows the authority of Christ.

Bowne's writings have not made the impression they deserved. He had not enough illustration, nor is philosophy ever a popular subject. Nevertheless, we have read the book with great satisfaction and it will please many of our readers. They will learn to admire Bowne and learn to love McConnell even more than they did before.

The Dilemma of Religious Knowledge, by *Chas. A. Bennett* (formerly professor of philosophy in Yale University). Edited by W. E. Hocking, Professor in Harvard University. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1931. 126 pages.

The certainty that men used to have about religion and its main questions, such as, Is there a God? Does he care about man? Will we survive death? such certainty is largely absent today. The difficulty of establishing answers to such questions has concentrated attention on the prior question, How can we know? "To cover up their lack of confidence on this point which has been called agnosticism, sophisticated thinkers are inclined to dodge the dilemma by eliminating the "metaphysical" or supernatural from religion, and retranslating all its language so that it will apply only to what we suppose we *can* know, human affairs and the human mind."

This book takes up a number of such attempts at explaining religion by ruling out the supernatural and the objective reality of the divine factor. In interpreting the nature of religion the author follows R. Otto (Marburg). Its fundamental element, he says, is mystery, evoking a sense of awe and humility. But there is in it also a mood of expectancy. It expects to be heard by the power which is shrouded in mysterious silence. Religion involves the desire to bend nature to the purposes of man. It generates devotion: the unseen world invades the visible order. Still, the objects of religion are opaque to human intelligence. True gnosis of them may be said to be nearer to silence than to speach. The transports of the converted are unintelligible to

the secular mind. In this respect religion is kin to the arts, for the feelings of artistic appreciation are alien to him who lacks the sense for beauty.

The vehicle whereby we lay hold of the world of religion we call faith. It is often said, in defence of religious faith, that science also presupposes faith, i. e., faith in the intelligibility of the natural order. The faith of science, however, is an assumption, a working assumption, the truth of which is being continually verified. To religion faith in God is not a hypothesis, but a fact of immediate intuitive conviction. Don't trust, the writer adds, the fortunes of your faith to argument. Certainty comes rather by experiment, by "standing or falling by your issue" ("Betting your life that there is a God").

Now the author takes up Feuerbach's position (Feuerbach, long dead but his view quite up to date). To him humanity is everything, nothing beyond it. God is nothing but human nature objectified and deified. God, creation, miracles, salvation, etc., are imaginative projections of human longings and self-confidence. The child sees literally, the adult figuratively: How modern his humanism, divine immanence, his subjectivity! And how unsatisfactory.

Then follows Sabatier, to whom God is present in feeling and desires, not to reason. He minimizes the historical facts; the symbolical meaning is the important thing. Santayana next. Religion is poetry. Religion transfigures life by idealizing it. Religion and superstition are the same in origin: fancy attaches images to facts and things, instead of ideas.

The last chapter deals with Freud and the subconscious. To Freud every worth while experience is explained as an "up-rush from the subconscious." The writer admits that, e. g., in conversion the deeps of the soul (the subconscious) are stirred, but says it is also true that "an angel may have troubled the pool."

All the way through he maintains that without an outside factor religion could not be explained nor maintained. The question of truth or falsehood is primary and inescapable. The metaphysical pretensions of religion are the most important thing about it. The argument in this book is largely negative, the positive side being reserved for a special, later treatment. The writer deals fairly and with understanding with each opponent. He never evades a difficulty, he is a very trusty guide. Besides, he writes a beautiful and easy style. A very commendable little volume. It is a pity the author died so young in 1930, forty-four years old.

England, von **Wilhelm Dibelius**. Fünfte, stark umgearbeitete Auflage. Deutsche Verlagsanstalt Stuttgart, Leipig und Berlin. 1929. 2 Bände.

Der Verfasser dieses Buches ist deutscher Philologe, dessen Spezialität das Studium der englischen Sprache ist. (Er wohnt jetzt ins Godesberg a. Rh. in Zurückgezogenheit.)* Das Buch hat sich einer großen Popularität rühmen können. Nicht nur in Deutschland fand es viele begeisterte Leser, sondern auch in England wurde er als eine höchst achtungswerte Interpretation des englischen Volks und Charakters gewürdigt. Seine englische Uebersetzung trägt den Titel: „England, Its Character and Genius." Hervorragende Rezensenten haben den Wunsch ausgesprochen, daß auch den Engländern solch ein Buch über Deutschland, von einem Engländer geschrieben, zu Gebote stehen möchte, das ihnen in gleich autoritativer Weise das deutsche Volk vorführte, wie D. es mit dem englischen getan.

Wir beschränken uns in unsrer Besprechung auf den zweiten Band. Der erste handelt von Englands Aufstieg zur Weltmacht und von seiner Staatsverfassung. Im zweiten werden Englands Religion und Kirche sowie sein Erziehungssystem (Universitäten und Volksschulen) besprochen.

Wenn ein deutscher Protestant einem anglikanischen Gottesdienst beiwohnt, so wird ihn nach kurzer Zeit das befremdende Gefühl anwandeln: Wie können nur diese Leute mit einem Gottesdienst zufrieden sein, der wesentlich im Ableiern liturgischer Formeln besteht, und in dem die Predigt meist eine höchst mittelmäßige Leistung ist? Dibelius gibt auf diese Frage eine äußerst treffende Antwort. Es fehlt, sagt er, der Masse des Engländertums der religiöse Individualismus der Deutschen. Religion ist für den Engländer nicht in erster Linie individuelles Leben, sondern Kultus, Verehrung, Anbetung des Höchsten; keine Angelegenheit des einzelnen, sondern gemeinsame Beteiligung und gemeinsames Glück im gemeinsamen Gottesdienst. Der deutsche Protestant geht zur Kirche, weil er vom Gottesdienst etwas haben will, der Engländer, weil Gott die ihm gebührende Ehre und Dankbarkeit empfangen soll. Der Deutsche sucht im Gottesdienst geistliche Stärkung, Erbauung im Glauben, vielleicht auch eine Auseinandersetzung mit intellektuellen Schwierigkeiten. Der Anglikaner widmet 20 Minuten der liturgischen Antiphonie, so wie es die Väter schon seit Jahrhunderten getan. Darauf folgt in der Messe der Höhepunkt, die Predigt könnte auch unterbleiben. Auf tiefere Probleme einzugehen, liegt dem Engländer ganz fern. Dogmatische Streitigkeiten berühren ihn nicht. Auch die Geistlichen beschäftigen sich wenig mit Theologie. England hat in all den Jahrhunderten seiner protestantischen Geschichte kein nennenswertes theologisches System produziert. Natürlich gilt das, was von der Staatskirche gesagt wird, nicht alles in gleicher Weise von den Freikirchen, denn naturgemäß findet man in diesen gerade die Elemente, die von jener vernachlässigt wurden. Aber auch die Freikirchen verdanken ihre Entstehung nicht so sehr dogmatischen Unterschieden, sondern solchen der Organisation (man denke an die Kongregationalisten, die Presbyterianer u. a.).

Der Gottesdienst der Anglikaner ist wesentlich Messe, Sakramentsverwaltung. Die katholisierende Richtung ist sehr stark im Wachsen, teils weil ihr Gottesdienst den Laien mehr ästhetische Befriedigung bietet, teils weil

* W. Dibelius ist kürzlich gestorben. Ed.

von Anfang an der katholische Charakter der Kirche möglichst erhalten geblieben ist. Ohrenbeichte, Marienverehrung, Sakramentsaufbewahrung und andre katholische Gebräuche finden Aufnahme. Nur die Priesterehe bezeichnet noch den protestantischen Geistlichen. Die päpstliche Kurie, so meint D., rechnet auf den Tag, wo sich der ganze Anglikanismus zurückfinden wird nach Rom. Doch wird das kaum je stattfinden, der Freiheitssinn des Engländers sträubt sich davor, die Oberhoheit eines fremden Potentaten anzuerkennen.

Die andern protestantischen Kirchen, insonderheit der Methodismus und die überragende Gestalt J. Wesleys, werden ansprechend beurteilt.

Bei Besprechung der englischen Förmmigkeit im allgemeinen wird der alte Anspruch stark betont, daß die Engländer sich für das auserwählte Volk halten. Die Puritaner hätten diesem schon bestehenden Trieb die religiöse Sanktion gegeben. Wirklich gebildete Leute würden über eine solche Fiktion lächeln, aber im Grunde sei das doch die Ueberzeugung des Durchschnitts-Engländers.

Treffliche Kapitel werden dem Unterrichtssystem des englischen Volks gewidmet. Der Verfasser zeigt auf Grund sorgfältigsten Studiums die Unterschiede des englischen Systems von dem deutschen auf. Die öffentlichen Schulen (wie Rugby und Eton) sind durchaus englisches Gewächs. Die Stellung und Person des „Headmaster" ist durchaus entscheidend. Das Ideal ist nicht, die Grundlage zu einer wissenschaftlichen Bildung zu legen, sondern die Schüler zu englischen „Gentlemen" zu erziehen. Die Universitäten Oxford und Cambridge sind Institute voll aristokratischen Geistes, in welchen diese Erziehung zum „Gentleman" fortgesetzt und vollendet wird. Es gibt auf diesen „Universitäten" keine juristische, medizinische noch theologische Fakultät. Sie bieten nur eine allgemein humanistische Ausbildung. Natürlich hat die neuere Zeit viel Wandlung gebracht, besonders in der Richtung größrer Demokratie und wirklicher wissenschaftlicher Leistung. Aber der alte Geist ist infolge des stark konservativen Charakters des Engländers noch recht lebendig. Der Engländer „still loves a Lord", und das Glied des alten Adels ist immer noch der große Mann.

In der Schlußbetrachtung zieht der Verfasser das Fazit. Der Engländer trägt nach ihm stark den Charakter des niedersächsischen Bauerntums, praktisch, beschränkter Horizont, nüchtern, tatkräftig. Er ist durchaus ein Willensmensch, strebt nach Herrschaft. Dem verdankt er seine Weltstellung. Der Puritanismus hat ihn stark beeinflußt, aber seine Religion ist nicht mystisch oder kontemplativ, sondern ethisch. Die Kirche und die Religion haben hier größern Einfluß als in irgend einem andern Land. Doch geht mit der religiösen Haltung ein gut Teil „Cant," Heuchelei. Der Engländer hat eine ungemeine Gabe, seinen Motiven ein frommes Mäntelchen umzuhängen.

Der Verfasser scheint uns Licht und Schatten gerecht zu verteilen. Zuweilen wirkt sein Bestreben, alles zu erklären, etwas mühsam. Doch er spricht stets mit größter Sachkenntnis, man hat das Gefühl, daß er eine Autorität ist auf seinem Gebiet. Was er von England sagt, gilt zum großen Teil auch hier in unserm Land und bei seinen angelsächsischen Eigenschaften. Es wird niemand die beiden Bände ohne großen Nutzen lesen. Wir wünschen dem prächtigen Werk weiterhin besten Erfolg.